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E. Strobes
pp Lord Gnome of Marshall

"He's suffering from Mittal fatigue"

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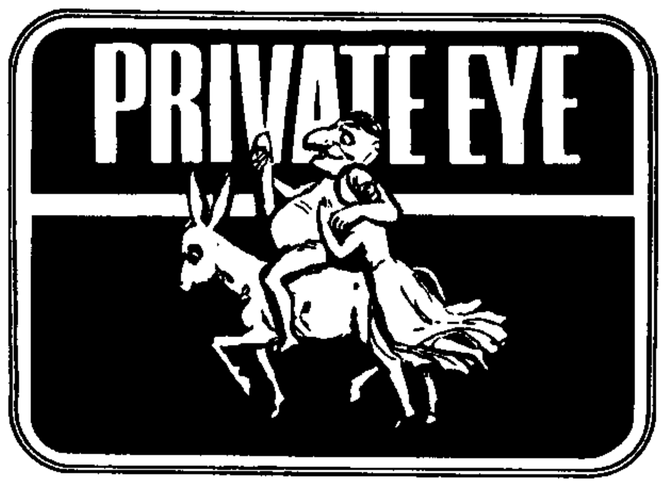

A 'steel' at £1.20

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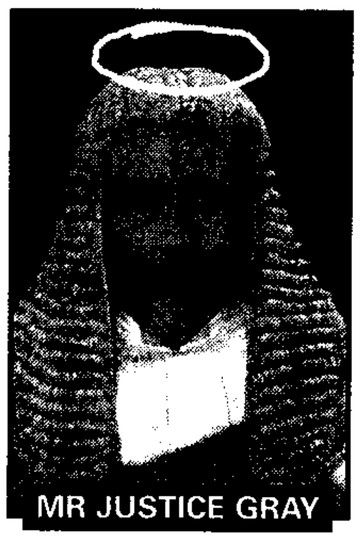
LEGAL NEWS

JOHN STUART Condliffe, the Cornish accountant who was discredited in the witness box after engaging the *Eye* in a decade of mind-blowingly expensive and pointless litigation, has begged to be let off the £100,000 he was ordered to pay the *Eye* when his libel action collapsed in November 2001 (see *Eye 1041*).

Condliffe sued the *Eye* over an article published in March 1992 alleging that he dishonestly overcharged some of his clients. His case finally imploded, however, when he accused his solicitors, Peter Carter-Ruck & Partners, of lying about the state in which his clients' files were delivered to their offices. On 5 February Condliffe wrote to the *Eye's* solicitors to say he has taken instruction from another firm of solicitors and is considering suing Carter-Fuck. He encloses a copy of a fantastically large bill sent to him by Carter-Fuck (which *Private Eye* would have had to pay if it had lost the case) and pleads with the *Eye* not to pursue him for payment while his dispute with his former solicitors remains unresolved.

Condliffe's total bill from Carter-Fuck comes to an unbelievable £981,684.08, of which he has already paid £461,037.34. The firm's own professional charges for the lawsuit are £575,000, while the barristers' fees total £95,550, including £77,050 for junior counsel, Rupert Elliott. (The invoice claims only £7,500 on behalf of the *Eye's* old friend Geoffrey Shaw QC who acted for most of the time on a no win, no fee basis. Ha!)

Carter-Fuck's photocopying charges alone come to nearly £70,000, a staggering sum, particularly as this included supplying a single set of copies of the 113 trial bundles (court documents prepared by Carter-Fuck) to the *Eye's* solicitors, when usual practice demands that the claimant's solicitors provide separate copies to the defendant, their solicitors and their barristers.


MR JUSTICE GRAY

During Condliffe's six week libel action against the *Eye*, Mr Justice Gray said he was "absolutely horrified" by the claimant's decision to increase the number of trial bundles from 28 to 113. He referred to the "huge costs and time" spent on the litigation and said that at some point in the future there needed to be an inquest into the enormous amount of paperwork created by Carter-Fuck. "At some stage," said Mr Justice Gray, "one's going to have to get to the bottom of this."

CONDLIFFE is not the only victim of Carter-Fuck's imaginative pricing policy. The firm recently applied for an interim hearing on costs in a libel action brought by its client Eugenia Williams against Mirror Group Newspapers (MGN), which was settled out of court in her favour. In March 1999, the *Sunday Mirror* wrongly alleged that Williams had taken a £20,000 bung to fix the outcome of an IBA heavyweight boxing match between Evander Holyfield and Lennox Lewis.

As part of the settlement MGN agreed to pay Carter-Fuck's costs and at an interim hearing on 25 January the law firm claimed it was owed more than £243,000. Mr Justice Gray hearing the application said: "I am bound to say that that figure appears to me to be astonishingly high for the claimant's costs in a relatively straightforward libel action settled before trial." He pointed out that the costs for the defendant's solicitors came to just £48,000 and ordered MGN to make an interim payment of £50,000.

THE shameful Mittal scandal and Tony Blair's indirect support for Romanian steelworkers over British ones will not have gone down well in Labour's heartlands.

And it will certainly not have been lost on Labour MPs like Aberavon's Hywel Francis, who with the support of colleagues such as Kim Howells recently launched the "Valleys First" initiative.

Francis's Aberavon constituency includes the massive Port Talbot steel complex; and the "Valleys First" initiative was set up to campaign for existing jobs while putting pressure on the government to come up with new opportunities in other parts of South Wales blighted by steel and coal cutbacks.

Corus, formerly British Steel, has a slightly better claim to being British-based than does Lakshmi Mittall's blue water tax haven outfit. Indeed, Corus is in the process of savagely pruning its workforce at the Llanwern plant near Newport, and is set to close its operations in Ebbw Vale altogether.

So what has caring Tony Blair done to shore up jobs in Britain's steel industry? Er, precisely nothing. And what of those steel workers, who through their union, the ISTC, loyally pay into "new" Labour's coffers as they have done for the best part of a century? Are they expecting a signed letter of support from Tony Blair? No they are not. They are anxiously awaiting the arrival of their P45s.

PRINCESS Margaret's cremation in Slough proved too much for *Times* hackette Laura Peek, who waxed lyrical about "the dappled reflection of neatly trimmed fir trees" dancing in the crematorium's windows as the "pansies, primulas and daffodils waved from the grassy verges".

She then clearly became transported, describing the "yap of greyhounds from nearby Slough dog track". Sadly, the dog track closed a full 14 years ago and is today a Co-op.

Princess Margaret Cremated

NEWS

TWO interesting facts emerged in Parliament on 12 February thanks to Liberal Democrat pressure.

First, the huge DTI-sponsored study of the competitive position of the UK in international markets, which has been going on since July 2000 and is due to be completed next month, has been conducted by none other than the Labour-friendly and highly competitive Arthur Andersen. The second was the amount of taxpayers' money shelled out by the ministry of work and pensions to the top five accounting firms for consultancy services in the first three years of the Labour government.

In 1997-98 the four other firms got £6.1m; Andersen Consulting £18.4m. In 1998-99, the four other firms got £7.3m; Andersen £21.3m. And in 1999-2000 the four other firms got £7m; Andersen £9m. Most of these handouts can be attributed to the notorious NIRS2 computer system which continues to be at least as wasteful of public money as the computer system installed by the Wessex regional health authority more than 10 years ago.

The authority's adviser at that time was Andersen Consulting, whose experts, after close and competitive consideration, came up with a startling recommendation for a suitable contractor: Andersen Consulting. The authority agreed at once. Andersen got the business and the disastrous system it installed lost the NHS £20m.

PS: Arthur Andersen audited Enron, the biggest-ever bankruptcy in America. So who audited insurance giant HIH, the biggest-ever bankruptcy in Australia? Er, Arthur Andersen.

WHILE the government clings to the belief that private enterprise and the free market can solve Britain's transport crisis, the private firms involved have themselves long since abandoned the free market.

Two companies, Arriva and FirstGroup, have been fined by the office of fair trading (OFT) for operating a cartel, the first such fines issued by the OFT. FirstGroup was fined £529,852 and Arriva £318,175 after they met in a hotel room in Leeds to carve up bus routes.

PS: The OFT showed its mettle though by immediately reducing both fines. Arriva will only pay £203,632, and FirstGroup nothing. The OFT said this was due to the cooperation of the firms, which also run much of Britain's rail network.

THE close contacts between the Inland Revenue and the big businesses whose taxes it is meant to collect (see *Eye* 1047) are becoming closer every day now that all the old Revenue and Customs buildings have been bought by a big multinational company based in a tax haven.

In a little-noticed press release last March, the Revenue boasted that it was flogging most of its buildings (and all the Customs buildings as well) to a firm called Mapeley Ltd. About 600 buildings have been sold for an estimated £1bn.

Mapeley Ltd, as the name suggests, is registered in good old England; but its parent – deceptively called Mapeley UK Co Ltd – is registered in the British Virgin Islands, a tax haven which the OECD, a Europe-wide organisation for economic cooperation and development, strongly condemned as one of the worst offenders.

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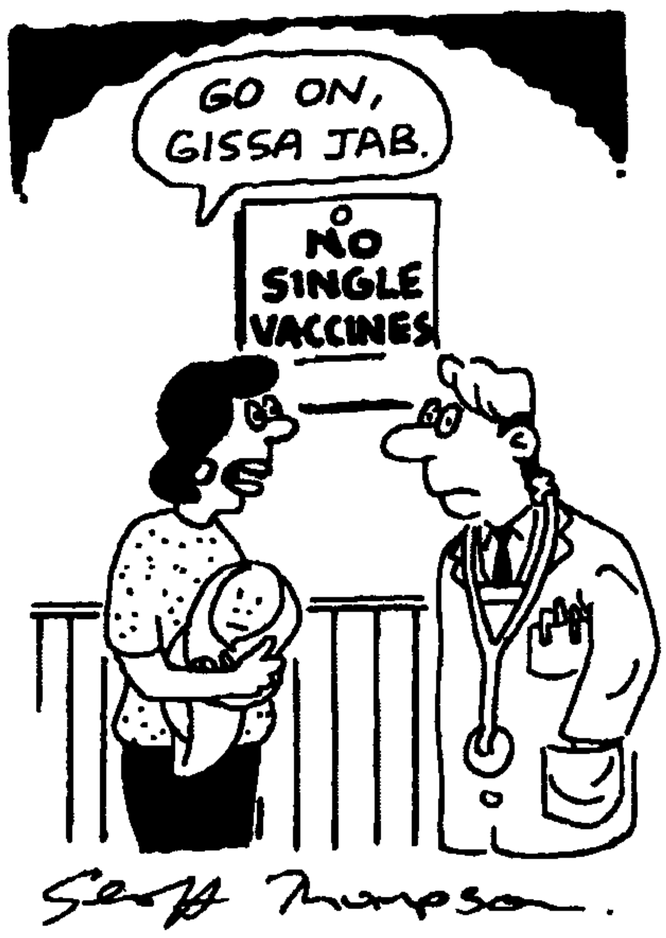


Street of Shame

THERE were tears of mirth at Wapping following the death of Princess Margaret when the hacks noticed that the News International flag outside the building was flying at half mast.

Even they realised that such a pious display of grief was really a bit rich coming from a stable of royal-bashing papers owned by their arch republican proprietor, Rupert Murdoch.

PIERS MORON seemed to enjoy his moment in the limelight as a star witness in the Naomi Campbell case, being mobbed by TV crews and paparazzi on the steps of the high court.

But his pleasure was marred by the photo which appeared in his own paper, the *Mirror*, with its court report last Tuesday. An order was circulated at the *Mirror* the next day that the picture must never be used again.

And for why? Piers – who denounced Naomi Campbell as a vain, self-seeking prima donna – felt it exaggerated his double chin.

"MORGAN Ponders a Buyout" screamed a headline in the *Sunday Express* on 10 February. The story, written by a certain Frank Bailey, claimed that senior *Mirror* executives led by Piers "Morgan" Moron are planning a £300m buyout of Trinity Mirror's three national newspapers. It went on to say that Moron was "cited by some in the City as a possible chief executive".

Shome mishtake, shurely? In the wake of Enron and other scandals, corporate governance is likely to be scrutinised far more closely in future. And what faith could be placed in a chief executive still tainted by the City Slickers' share-ramping scandal?

By happy coincidence the byline on this highly speculative yarn, Frank Bailey, is in fact the pseudonym of Anil Bhoyrul, Piers's former City Slicker crony. By an even happier coincidence the same article suggested an alternative scenario: that one of the Trinity Mirror titles, the *Sunday People*, might be sold to motor-racing tycoon Bernie Ecclestone, who has been "building up his publishing arm" through publications such as *EuroBusiness* and *Formula One Magazine*.

These mags are run for Ecclestone by Tom Rubython – erstwhile patron and employer of one Anil Bhoyrul.

SO IT'S official: Richard "Dirty" Desmond is the 16th most powerful person in Britain. Well, that's according to the *Sunday Express*'s absurd Power List 2002, anyway.

Equally amazing, *Daily Express* editor Chris Williams is ranked 43rd, just one place down from the Queen, for his success in securing the paper "a mid-market reach far in excess of the *Daily Telegraph*, *Independent* or *Times*".

According to the latest circulation figures, however, the *Torygraph* sells 968,771 copies a day compared to the *Express's* 894,099, while sales of the *Express* have dropped 5.2 percent since January 2001 when they stood at 943,898.

At least Desmond's lackeys had the grace to place their boss's chums Tony and Cherie Blair above him at numbers one and eight respectively. As Desmond's entry reads: "The publisher is an assured leader with high level contacts in business, Westminster and Buckingham Palace, and among celebrities." True enough. In the next couple of weeks, Desmond, Williams and other senior hacks from the *Express* are off to Downing Street for a big *arslikhan* love-in.

IN THE latest edition of the National Union of Journalist's members' magazine, *Journalist*, the union says it couldn't possibly comment on the *Eye's* revelation that Richard Desmond has applied for NUJ membership (see *Eye 1046*).

"Disclosing information about individuals from our membership database is a breach of the data protection act, so we can neither confirm nor deny," writes the *Journalist's* Victor Noir. "But there is an old saying that it is better to have the flasher inside the lavatory masturbating than outside doing it in public. Probably." Whatever can he mean?

WHICH gossip columnist on the *Daily Mail*'s pisspoor "Wicked Whispers" column is about to leave, having had problems recognising any of the great and good at the parties she attends? And which columnist originally got her job after writing a letter of complaint to the *Mail* about an article concerning herself in Nigel Dempster's diary? A piece in which Dumpster wrote about her relationship with Anne Diamond's former husband, 55-year-old TV agent Mike Hollingsworth, and described her as a student at Oxford Brookes University, while she actually studied theology at Oxford University?

Unlike Wicked Whispers, the *Eye* can tell you the answer to the question. It is John McEntee's 22-year-old assistant Kimberly Stewart-Mole, who has been with the diary since its launch in November and is to leave by mutual agreement at the end of the month.

Is this story boring enough to put in the *Mail*'s Wicked Whispers?

"It's run by Group Fire"

CAMPAIGNERS against plans to build the biggest wind farm in the UK at Cefn Croes in the Cambrian mountains are dismayed by the behaviour of the press complaints commission (PCC).

It has rejected two complaints about the *Western Mail*'s coverage of the proposed farm, which claim bias against the protestors. The wind farm is backed financially by Enron Wind Development Overseas, a subsidiary of the ill-fated Enron corporation (see *Eye 1047*).

Obviously the PCC's reluctance to punish this reporting has nothing to do with the fact its chairman, until very recently, was none other than Enron director Lord Wakeham. But the decisions still rile the protestors.

PROUD to be the only British paper to employ a black Zimbabwean as its stringer in Harare, the *Independent* was outraged by front-page claims in the *Times* on 12 February that reports of the arrest, detention and treatment of Basildon Peta earlier in the month had been at best exaggerated if not made up altogether.

The *Indy*'s somewhat embarrassed correspondent in Africa's new heart of darkness now says that although technically he was never actually, er, held in a police cell, the foetid and suffocating room in which he was questioned might as well have been. And that while he had indeed been allowed home rather than being kept overnight in the "cell", this had been a favour from kindly officers whose wish for anonymity he chose to respect.

But did Peta do the exaggerating or was his copy gingered up in London? No doubt Leonard Doyle, the *Indy* foreign editor, who from his Canary Wharf vantage point often seems to know the world better than his dwindling band of reporters across the globe, can throw light on the matter.

But it's unlikely that Peta, whose reputation has been so recklessly called into question in return for a couple of cheap headlines, will complain: after months of pleading he had only just secured the reluctant assistance of the paper (prop: Tony "Baked Beans" O'Reilly, whose business dealings with Zimbabwe's evil dictator go way back) to get his family to safety in South Africa – and now he's gone to join them.

A SLIGHT oversight on the *Daily Telegraph* website, which has recently begun asking visitors to register their details in order to log on.

The pop-up menu asking for year-of-birth appears only to accept entries from 1920 onwards. Those over the age of 82 – who surely make-up a decent proportion of the paper's distinguished readership – are therefore not invited to the party.

Another unfortunate consequence is that the redoubtable W.F. Deedes will have to collar a more junior employee to search his own newspaper's archives: he too is deemed too old for the online revolution.

PORN WARS

ALL the valiant efforts by Richard "Dirty" Desmond to turn himself respectable – buying national newspapers, schmoozing with Tony Blair – are jeopardised by the rapidly escalating "porn wars" between the *Express* proprietor and a group of former staff from his top-shelf mags. Indeed, Des's reputation may soon be stripped as bare as Portia Phillips and the other lissom lovelies who can be found in the current issue of *UK Wives* magazine.

UK Wives should on no account be confused with *Horny Housewives*. The latter is published by Dirty Des's Northern & Shell (N&S), whereas the former is one of several new titles from Sapphire Multi Media Ltd, a company set up recently by defectors from the Desmond smut empire.

As we reported in the last *Eye*, Des is suing the "traitors" for pinching certain "trade secrets" – secrets, presumably, such as how to spell "cum" and where to place a peeled banana for best photographic effect. The traitor-in-chief is Deric Botham, who was for many years in charge of N&S's smut factory.

Alas, so far things are not going too well for the media baron. Dirty Des insisted that Botham and his fellow-traitors be hauled into the high court two weeks ago, but the judge agreed with their contention that they needed more time to prepare a defence. N&S lawyers also failed in their attempt to reach a deal with one of the defectors who is a German national, and who recently slapped a racial harassment suit on Dirty Des for saying "Heil Hitler" whenever they met.

Desmond's solicitors offered to remove the man from the list of defendants in the "trade secrets" case if he in turn would abandon his harassment suit. The last thing Des wants at this stage is a public airing of his pathological hatred of the Hun, and his opinion that "all Germans are fucking Nazis": these views might not go down too well with the German Commerzbank, which lent him £97m to buy the *Express* and may be called upon for further finance if Des makes any new acquisitions.

Desmond's alarm and fury were redoubled last week with the news that Deric Botham – who was also the chief architect of Dirty Des's lucrative Fantasy Channel, bringing in 300,000 subscribers in the first year – had agreed to work with the *Playboy*/Adult Channel in direct competition with Fantasy. Since Botham has a huge following among the ordinary perv in the street, this could severely damage Fantasy's market share – and revenues.

Paul Dunthorne, head of the Fantasy Channel, was urgently despatched to a meeting with *Playboy* executives on 6 February in the hope of dissuading them. To no avail: *Playboy*/Adult Channel has now announced that from the beginning of March it will carry promotions for the mags produced by Botham at Sapphire Multi-Media – including such alluring publications as *Teen Angels* ("All 18 and Eager!"), *40 Up* ("Masses of Mature Muff!!") and *Naked Ambition*.

To meet this challenge, N&S has informed the trade that it is closing a number of adult magazines and will use the substantial funds saved to invest in its "top titles". A likely story: the editorial budget for the cancelled magazines is a few hundred quid a month, which is barely enough to pay for toner for the office photocopier.

Its claim that the remaining titles will now have more robust porn is equally implausible. Photos taken before 1990, of which most N&S adult titles are full, do not feature "hard poses". Even if they wanted to make the mags filthier they couldn't, since WH Smith and Menzies control the level of lewdness and lay down strict rules on what can and can't be shown.

Certainly the news trade is unconvinced by Dirty Des's latest hype. The TS Group (which includes 1,200 newsagents) has just decided to drop *all* N&S porn titles, apparently because hardly anyone buys them. *Eros*, for example, sells under 300 copies a month, though N&S pretends that its circulation is in the thousands. Overall, sales of Des's porn-mags are down by 40 percent, mainly because one-handed readers are fed up seeing the same women in the same ancient photos recycled over and over again – an inevitable consequence of his refusal to spend any money.

These and many other "trade secrets" will be aired when the case against the traitors comes to court, and Des's nervous henchmen are fearful of what else Botham may decide to reveal. The latest issue of *Naked Ambition* includes a feature by one Mr Wiggy, aka Botham, about a "former colleague" at another "publishing company" who is facing allegations of sexual harassment. For some reason this has caused consternation in the office of one particular senior exec at the Grey Lubyanka.

Meanwhile, an increasingly desperate Dirty Des is consulting his personal oracle Jeremy Beadle, the much-loved practical joker. If lawsuits fail, the "traitors" may yet wake up to find a 300-foot hole full of rotting cows outside their houses.

PS: One consolation for Desmond is that the porn wars will not be covered by his chief rival, the *Daily Mail*. A story about Botham for the *Evening Standard* was spiked recently when the paper's lawyers pointed out the terms of the ceasefire agreed between the *Express* and *Mail* after their mud-slinging contest last year: that the *Express* would desist from writing about Lord Rothermere's love-child as long as Associated Newspapers undertook never to mention that Dirty Des is a pornographer.

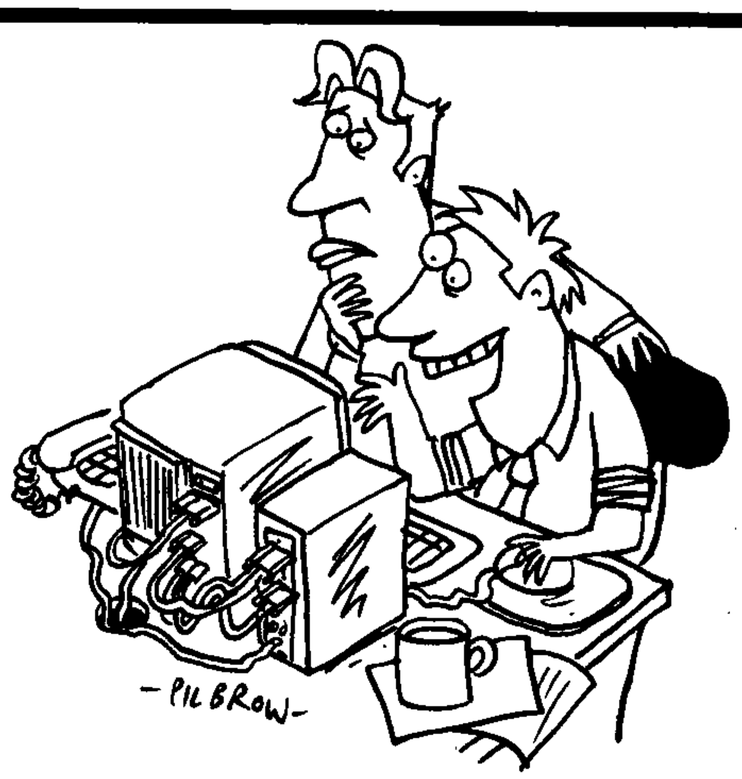
DOT.COMEDY

THE website of Quintessentially, the absurd "life management" business set up by It boys Ben Elliot and Tom Parker Bowles, is a gem of self-delusion.

The dot.com, which describes itself as "butler, maid and private secretary all in one", claims it has members "from all social classes and income groups, all of whom have joined because they share (our) philosophy of quality, style and service."

Under "Vetting Criteria" the boys say: "Quintessentially has, like any club, attracted members through word of mouth and referral. As we gather momentum, we anticipate a large number of unsolicited approaches… The usual financial references will, obviously, be required."

Hm. With recent trading losses of £800,000, would the boys themselves even qualify for membership?



"This is our website – www.allthegoodnameshavealreadygone.com"

THE commitment of the former Tory government to "regeneration" was symbolised in the 1997 general election campaign by a silly walk. Prime minister John Major walked through Teesside with Margaret Thatcher, his predecessor. The point of the walk was to show how "regenerated" the area had become since Thatcher ploughed through waste land 10 years earlier.

The instrument of this regeneration was the Teesside development corporation, one of 14 similar corporations consisting almost entirely of unelected businessmen, lawyers and accountants nominated by the Tory government. Most development corporations were wound up before the Tories lost office. They had all been frightful flops and some, notably in Leeds, left behind a strong stink of corruption.

In Teesside the corporation started boldly by lending £2.2m to a former criminal bankrupt who wanted to set up a cake factory, which quickly went into receivership. Other grandiose plans were equally effective in regenerating the area. Just over a year ago, in December 2000, the *Eye* reported the concerns of the Labour MP for Middlesbrough South, Ashok Kumar, who was worried about the way the corporation had spent millions of pounds for which no one seemed accountable.

When he raised these matters, he was fobbed off by an "internal audit" in the department for the environment, local government and the regions. The repeated failure of the two auditors to supply any important information, and the accompanying whitewash, were exposed in *Eye* 1016. Furious at this treatment, Mr Kumar went to the national audit office (NAO) and demanded further inquiries.

Using its extensive powers of discovery, the NAO conducted a full inquiry. Its report comes out next week, but already the Commons public accounts committee (PAC) has announced a full day's inquiry (on 4 March) and has summoned Sir Richard Mottram, permanent secretary at the new department of transport, local government and the regions, and Duncan Hall, former chief executive of the Teesside development corporation, to give evidence.

LIBERAL Democrat health spokesman Lord Clement-Jones has been lobbying for some unhealthy firms.

As managing director of DLA Upstream, the lobbying arm of lawyers Dibb Lupton Alsop, his client list includes the Incorporated Society of British Advertisers (ISBA), a trade body comprising most of Britain's largest consumer companies – not least big distillers and brewers like Bass, Whitbread, Carlsberg and Holsten.

The group is fighting tooth and nail to stop European union (EU) proposals to restrict alcohol advertising… at a time when Britain's chief medical officer has warned about rocketing deaths among young people due to heavy drinking.

The ISBA is also lobbying hard to halt plans to limit the advertising of unhealthy foods to children by "warning the UK Food Standards Agency against taking an interventionist stance towards food advertising and promotion". The ISBA, whose members include McDonald's, Burger King, Coca Cola, Nestlé and Walkers Crisps, denies that "advertising of food to children is directly responsible for increasing levels of obesity in the population".

BEFORE the 1997 general election a nasty row erupted between Plymouth, surrounded by marginal seats, and Rosyth in Scotland, surrounded by safe Labour seats. At issue was the best place to install expensive equipment for refitting Britain's nuclear Trident submarines.

The Tories, nervous of those marginal seats, decided the best place was Devonport, Plymouth, especially as the docks there had just been privatised and taken over by a new company, DML. This principled decision has gone rapidly from disaster to disaster.

On 5 February the *Western Morning News* revealed that the original figure bid by DML for upgrading facilities at the dockyard (£240m) had almost tripled to between £638m and £659m. The ministry of defence told the paper the taxpayer was still getting "value for money", but people in Plymouth are not quite clear what that value is. They are not even convinced of the need for Trident submarines, let alone in their back yard, and are further irritated by the environment agency's recent decision to allow the company to disgorge five times the permitted rate of Tritium, a radioactive substance, into the river Tamar.

An urgent inquiry into the escalating costs of the project is likely to be carried out by the treasury, whose boss, chancellor Gordon Brown, learnt a lot about the subject when he campaigned for the original contract to go to Rosyth, in his constituency.

HOME secretary David Blunkett has launched a new "not for profit company", the "Experience Corps", to mobilise older volunteers.

Blunkett gave £20m of taxpayers' cash to the body – the largest sum ever passed by the home office to a voluntary venture – in order to recruit 250,000 volunteers. But who has he chosen as chief executive?

Step forward Maggie Semple, who gained useful experience wasting much larger sums of money and failing to meet even more impressive targets as a director of the New Millennium Experience Company, with special responsibility for the dome's dismal "learning zone"

SCOTTISH secretary Helen Liddell is holding a reception in Edinburgh next month for unsung Scottish heroines – those members of the public who do good in the community but receive little recognition.

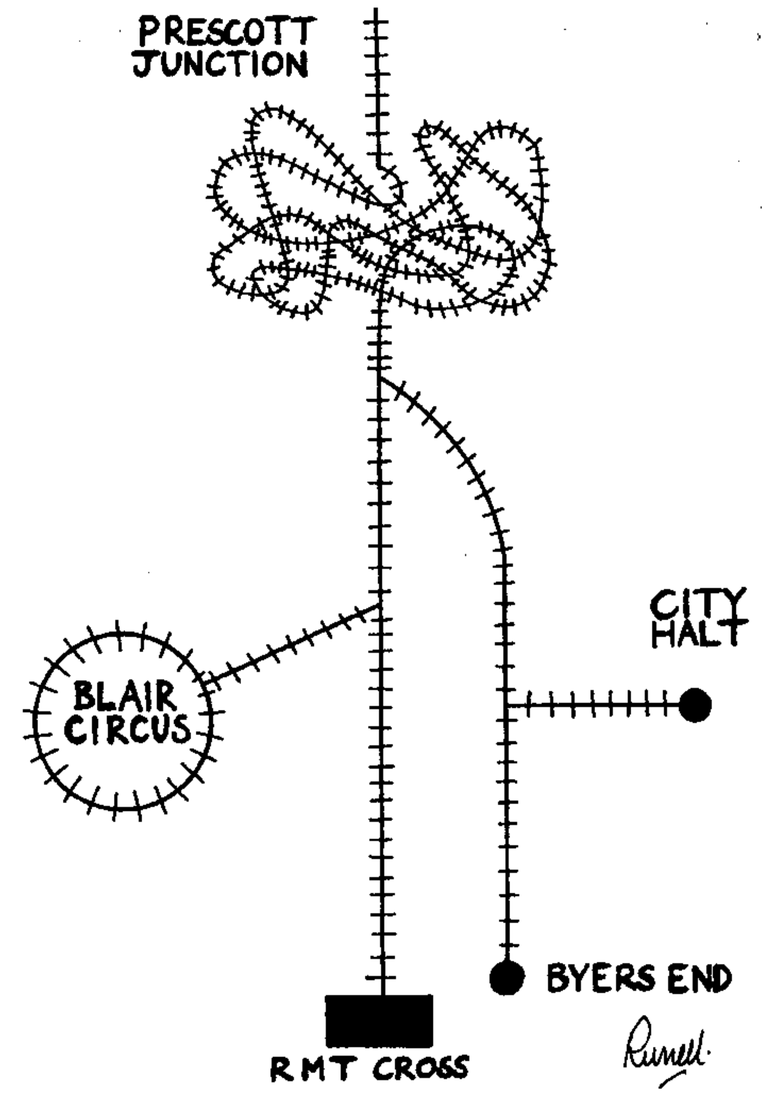
An admirable cause, you might say, given that most of the women to be honoured are involved in social issues. Of course some may hold different opinions to the secretary of state… but there is no danger of the reception becoming a worthwhile forum for debate.

Invitations have been sent out via constituency MPs and 95 percent of the returns so far are Labour party nominees. The "security checks" on the returns indicate that any heroines unsympathetic to the "new" Labour project have been carefully barred.

ALL MPs are keen to spread the news of their good work in the community, but Dr Jenny Tonge, the Lib Dem member for Richmond Park, has been a little premature in this department.

On 6 February her office issued a press release to local newspapers concerning her visit to the local Shooting Stars Children's Hospice, which quoted her as saying: "It was an honour to meet the brave children at the hospice. The work the doctors and nurses do at the Shooting Stars Children's Hospice is second to none and is so important for these children's well being."

No doubt all this will be true… when the hospice is actually built. An apologetic spokesperson at Dr Tonge's constituency office admitted to the *Eye* that the press release had been a "complete mistake". The news release should have said that Dr Tonge, who was away in Africa when it was written, met fundraisers who are desperately seeking £1m to build the hospice. (Donations happily received.)



LORD Sainsbury has launched the "science and engineering ambassadors" programme which will send scientists into schools to try to enthuse youngsters about science.

And who is backing the scheme? None other than aerospace "defence" giant BAE Systems, the Airbus-to-arms company created by the marriage of British Aerospace and Marconi. Let's hope the kidz get told about all the fields of scientific endeavour and not just the ones involving weapon systems.

HOW cheering to see Michael Portillo forging a new career as a features writer.

Only months ago when he was forced out of the battle for the Tory leadership, Portillistas blamed the *Daily Mail's* homophobic attacks on his stance over section 28. But he has since penned several pieces for the *Mail's* sister paper, the *Mail on Sunday*. His latest contribution on 17 February records his dinner in a prison canteen with his "old friend" Jeffrey Archer.

But oh how fickle are the hearts of men! Those on the London political party circuit could have sworn that in private Portillo has been referring to Archer as "that dreadful man".

ONE by-product of the Good Friday agreement was the setting up of a Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) whose job is to find rights missed by the European convention on human rights and stick them in a new bill of rights. This will spark lots of new court cases… and well-paid work for lawyers.

According to the NIHRC, proportional representation and segregated schooling are both "human rights" – as is the use of Scots in Northern Ireland alongside the English and Gaelic languages.

Thus the NIHRC – or *The Norlin Airland Commeission o Fowkrichts* – will issue all its literature in Scots. As its consultation document explains: "The Human Rights Act 1998 brocht the maist fek o the Convention o Europe intae UK law direct.

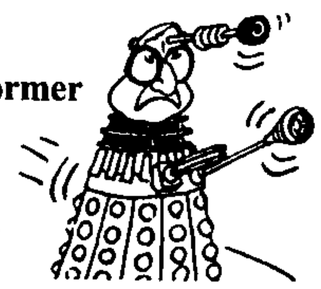
"Houaniver, the Convention o Europe, writ in 1950, disna gang faur eneuch in daelin wi modren day fowkrichts concerns in Norlin Airland. A Leit o Richts wul can help dael wi the no docht pairts o the Convention o Europe."

Obviously "the richts o weimenfowk" are terribly important, and "coequalitie legislation in Norlin Airland, maist ava adae wi employ an ingang tae services, areddies addresses want o pairitie in haundlin an ingang til inlat for weimenfowk."

And so on. What Ulster secretary John Reid makes of all this remains to be seen.

'Backbiter'

BIRTSPEAK



CAN the dead hand of former BBC director-general Lord Birt be detected in "new" Labour's hiring of yet another senior spin doctor?

As if Labour didn't have enough media experts already, it has just created the post of assistant general secretary (party projection). That person will be responsible for "image and external projections" and be the party's "definitive media voice".

Birt is increasingly influential as an unofficial adviser to Tony Blair, and the advertisement for the post is vintage Birtspeak. The candidate's key purpose will be "overrall strategic management and development of the departments within the remit..." blah, blah, and he or she will have an "understanding of how strategic management impacts and influences operational management", etc.

Whoever gets this "exciting post" must also be able to work under intense pressure "with conflicting priorities". Given the opposing priorities of the Blair and Brown factions and the warring between Peter Mandelson and just about everyone, the ad is at least honest.

Court Circular

PRINCESS Margaret's death enabled Buckingham Palace to put into action further elements of its "Diana Plan", first revealed in *Eye* 1038.

The flag flew at half-mast above the palace and Brenda was seen, returned to London and visited the coffin – things unheard of before the controversy following Diana's death.

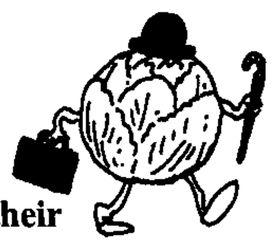
More significant was Prince Charles's decision to record a personal tribute to his late "darling aunt", inviting cameras into Sandringham – the most private of royal homes. But this was no spontaneous outburst of affection. After Diana's death the Queen had to be forced to address the nation in a belated attempt to show the people that the royals had "feelings".

Under the new plan a broadcast of some form is to be made on the death of every senior royal – and Charles has the job of making them. If Charles himself pops his clogs the tribute will be made by Andrew, or possibly Anne.

The speech presented one or two problems as it required Charles to wear his heart on his sleeve, something he never does well. But private secretary Stephen Lamport and his deputy Mark Bolland put together something acceptable to Charles, who only struggled on referring to the Queen as "my Mama". The spin doctors wanted to find something more formal than "Mummy" and less formal than "the Queen". They compromised on "Mama", sounding comfortably close to a deferential "ma'am".

'Flunkey'

BRUSSELS SPROUTS



UNDER the guise of terrorist threats our Eurocrats have been paving the way for their dreaded EU arrest warrant to become a government bill here in Britain. They were doing so before the bill was even agreed by EU justice minister last week.

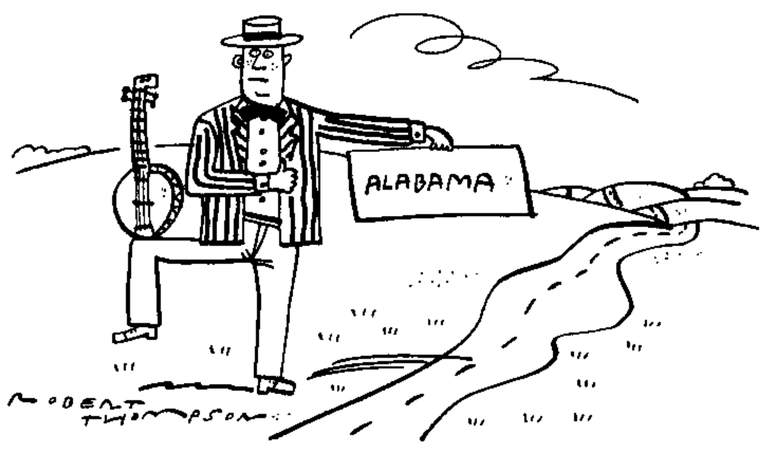
According to the home office, the warrant is to be introduced in parliament this session, even though no MP appears to have seen it and Commons officials know nothing about it.

According to the European commission, the warrant was agreed by ministers at the Laeken summit last December. It will allow citizens to be arrested, deported and jailed by foreign officials without charge, unprotected by Britain's habeas corpus law and subject to continental laws.

Conservative MEP Timothy Kirkhope, the party's spokesman on justice and home affairs, said the arrest warrant was "just a vehicle to harmonise EU criminal law... a practical impossibility with different procedures, different policies and court methods and very little protection on the continent for the person for whom the warrant is sought."

The former home office minister added: "The EU warrant cannot work parallel with extradition proceedings which in terms of human legal rights matter a lot for the subject." Expressing his amazement that "British lawyers were so quiet over this threat to human rights and civil liberties", he observed: "German lawyers find it extraordinary that we are going down this path."

MEPs introduced a compromise proposal for the warrant on 12 December. It included arrests for participation in a criminal organisation, stealing endangered plants, racism and xenophobia and motor crime, among others – oh, and terrorism.



CHARITY NEWS

AFTER widespread bombing ceased in Afghanistan in December, the British-based office of Cameo, the landmine clearance charity, recognised that it had a vital role to play.

Even before the war began, 724 square kilometres of the country were already infested with mines. Since then during US bombing raids 1,150 cluster bombs have been dropped on 188 locations (one of which destroyed £8m worth of UN demining equipment). Accordingly Cameo offered to deploy 65 of its landmine clearance specialists immediately, and did so through the normal channel of the department for international development (DFID).

Expecting DFID to be keen to use its expertise, Cameo was surprised when it was referred to the UN mine action service. The move is in line with DFID's latest policy decision to channel all demining funds through the UN. These funds consist of a £10m annual budget and an additional £3m allocated specifically for landmine clearance in Afghanistan.

The problem with going via the UN is that the organisation creams off a 14 percent handling charge for all funds. The knock-on effect of the latest decision is that £420,000 of the funds intended to help clear Afghanistan of landmines, cluster bombs and unexploded ordinance will go to paying UN bureaucrats.

Warballs

"Some people might suggest that conservation in general and conservation of molluscs in particular are irrelevant or at least of minor importance following the dreadful events of 11 September 2001 and their consequences. However..."

— *Tentacle*, newsletter for mollusc specialists.

"The Perrier Young Jazz Awards, launched in 1998, will not take place this year. Daphne Barrett, chairman and chief executive of PR agency Infoplan, who organised the events, said: 'In the light of recent events, post 11 September, we felt it was not appropriate to hold the event this year.' She did not rule out the return of the event in the future."

— *Jazzwise* magazine, February issue.

"Let's also remember that in America, in the aftermath of 11 September, one of the most often cited routines of daily life that people missed and wanted back was (dare I say it?) advertising."

— Allen Rosenshine, chairman and chief executive of BBDO Worldwide (aka "the king of Madison Avenue"), *Campaign* magazine.

"The political strife and roller-coaster fluctuations in share prices ushered in by the 11 September terrorist assault on the United States have certainly made short-term prospects for the planning consultancy market very difficult to call."

— *Planning*, journal of the Royal Town Planning Institute.

"The world changed forever on 11 September with the tragic terrorist attacks on the USA. This and the ensuing war has implications for everyone on the planet. The offshore world is no exception... Whatever happens, it will be increasingly necessary for our clients to select the best regulated offshore and onshore jurisdictions... We examine structures which can be used to achieve the tax-saving or asset protection aims of the client."

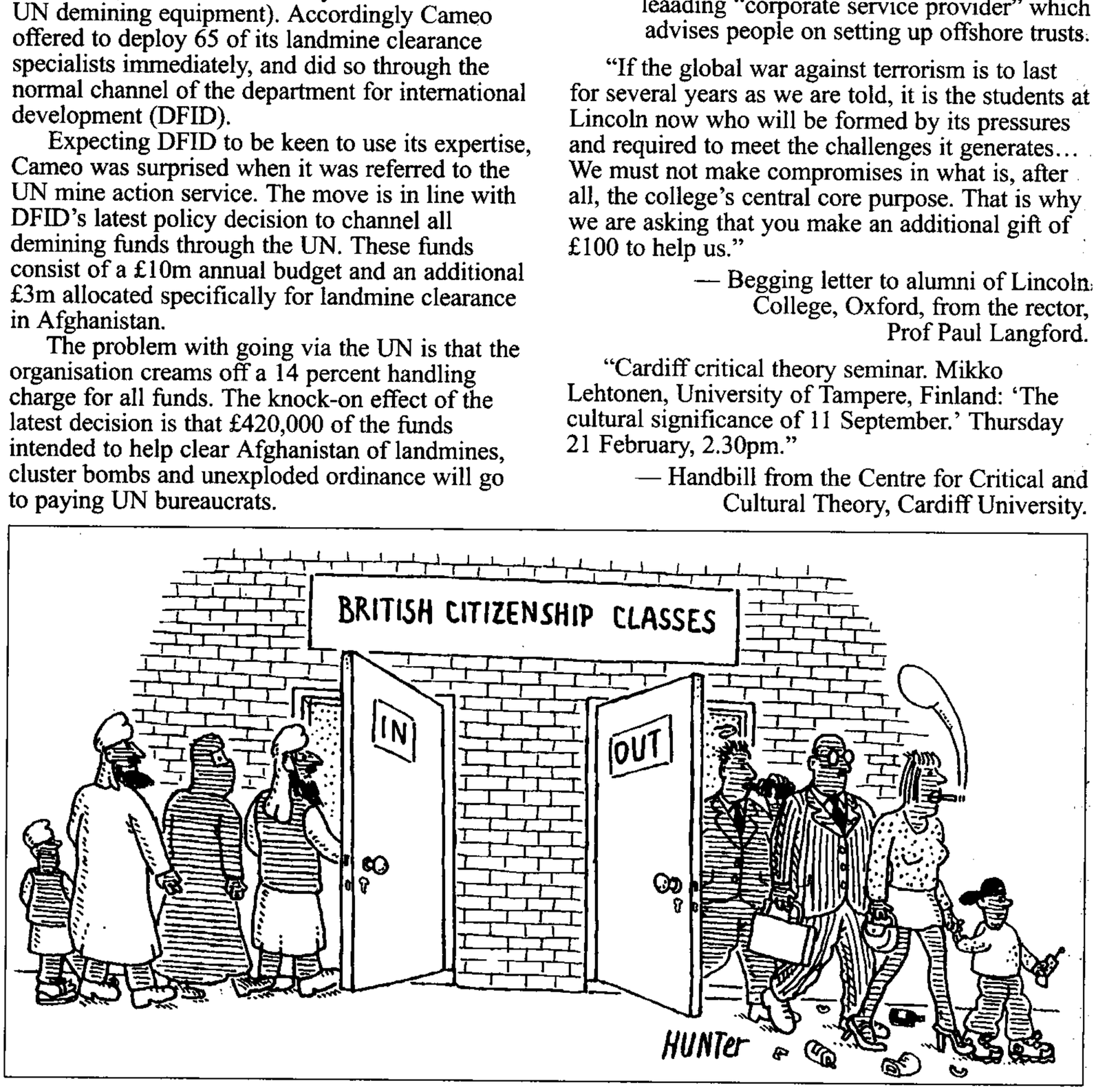
— Brochure for conference organised by ILS, leaading "corporate service provider" which advises people on setting up offshore trusts.

"If the global war against terrorism is to last for several years as we are told, it is the students at Lincoln now who will be formed by its pressures and required to meet the challenges it generates... We must not make compromises in what is, after all, the college's central core purpose. That is why we are asking that you make an additional gift of £100 to help us."

— Begging letter to alumni of Lincoln College, Oxford, from the rector, Prof Paul Langford.

"Cardiff critical theory seminar. Mikko Lehtonen, University of Tampere, Finland: 'The cultural significance of 11 September.' Thursday 21 February, 2.30pm."

— Handbill from the Centre for Critical and Cultural Theory, Cardiff University.



TV

Outside The Rules (BBC1)
Class of... (BBC2)

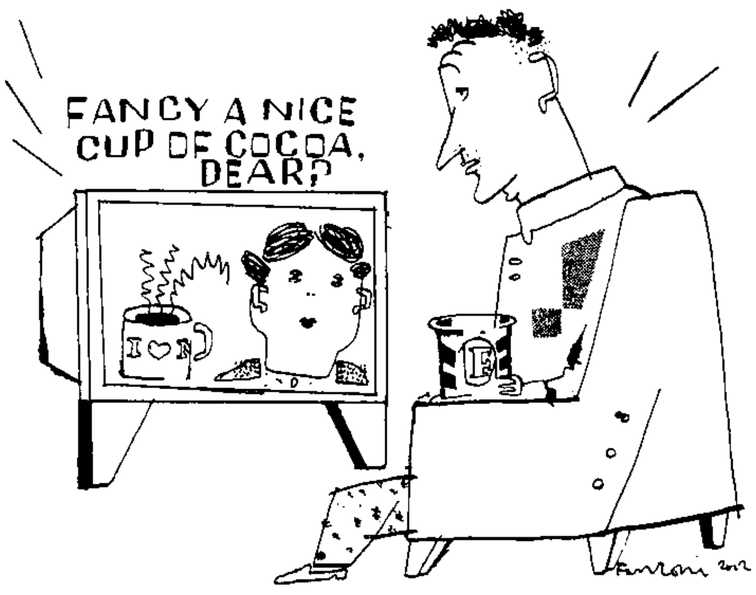
THE birth of Copy Cat — the first American moggy to be copied from an existing one in a laboratory — led to the usual fretting on the news about cloning. But there are no such worries in the world of television entertainment, where two more programming copy-cats offered themselves for stroking last weekend.

The new Sunday night thriller **Outside The Rules** belongs to a series called Crime Doubles which is supposed to refer to the fact that the stories are two-parters but here seemed to mean that the series is a dead ringer for about a dozen other TV police procedurals. This is *Silent Witness* crossed with *Cracker* to create a vehicle which also has a few broken hairs and fingerprints left by *Dangerfield* and *Waking The Dead*.

Daniella Nardini – the Scots nympho from *This Life* – plays Natalie Vine, a clinical psychologist who specialises in criminal psychopaths. This distinguishes her from the forensic psychiatrist played by Robbie Coltrane and the forensic pathologist played by Amanda Burton... but she does pretty much the same things: she immediately becomes a quasi-detective, interviewing a child-killer not to categorise her psychosis but to discover where she has hidden her final victim.

The psychology of Natalie Vine herself is the usual telly-thriller simplicities. In the first two minutes of episode one, she conveniently sketches her past to her shrink: "Classic child of an alcoholic — I can't handle rejection." This massive chip is further fattened when Natalie watches the child-killer interacting with other inmates on CCTV in jail and comments: "Someone once told her she was worthless – she's been making up for it ever since."

A mental professional who's as nutty as the patients is funny in *Frasier* but now a cliché in thrillers. The on-a-plate narration continues with the instant revelation that Natalie's new boss is a bloke she was really rude to at a conference in Toronto four years before. Personal problems, professional tension... this TV tec baggage has been checked through the scanner so often now. The



"Oh no – it's Referees' Wives"

sameyness is compounded by Nardini's performance which is Anna from *This Life* with a different haircut. She seems to be one of those actresses who, cast neatly in her first major role, is exposed by subsequent ones as having a limited range.

For these reasons *Beyond The Rules* seems unlikely ever to turn up in a television nostalgia show of which the latest is **Class of...** in which Zoe Ball referees a quiz between male and female teams of graduates from the same school. It started with boys v girls from the *Class of...* '84 at a Manchester Comp. They answered questions on the popular culture from the year they left. Did this record chart higher or lower than that one? Which of these hit TV shows wasn't premiered in that year?

Intended to trigger recognition in the audience of events they'd also lived through, the quiz works best as a side-game in which you look for references to other series. You can all too easily imagine the planning meeting. "Hey, did you see in the papers about the friends reunited website? There must be a show in that." Four decaff lattes and a few sheets of yellow legal pad later, you have *I Love 1984* crossed with *Top Of The Form* and *The Weakest Link*. Voiceovers by Simon Bates and Kid Jensen then touch the retro buttons. Even the individual rounds are derivative: the mystery guest one, in which the ex-kids quiz a figure from the year in question, is straight from *They Think It's All Over*.

The pity is that occasional comments from the players or former classmates in the audience — about the day that Sharon Wallace flashed her boobs or who went on a first-date to the cinema with whom — hint at a nostalgia to be had from school reunions which is far more intriguing than what was on TV or at number one.

The Friends Reunited phenomenon on the net will eventually spawn an interesting documentary or observational series. The problem is that this idea emerged in the time when everything on TV had to be a game or quiz show because of *The Weakest Link* and *Who Wants?* But that's now just so 2001.

'Square Eyes'

DUMB BRITAIN

The Weakest Link, BBC1/2

Anne Robinson: Which British politician is credited with founding the Metropolitan police while he was home secretary?

Contestant: Douglas Hurd.

AR: Who was prime minister when England won the world cup in 1966?

Contestant: Woodrow Wilson.

AR: Who was elected leader of the Conservative party in September 2001?

Contestant: Pass.

Owen Money show, BBC Radio Wales

Owen Money: In 30 seconds, name as many well-known politicians as you can.

Caller: Er, Tony Brown. And Nigel Benn. (*Silence.*)

Answers: *1 Sir Robert Peel. 2 Harold Wilson. 3 Iain Duncan Smith.*

MEDIA NEWS

THE game may soon be up for ITN's pisspoor 24-hour news service. The ITN News Channel is up for sale in a desperate bid to avoid closing down this costly foray into the exciting world of digital television.

All hopes rest with ITV, itself struggling with its own underperforming digital service. But if the idea is that calling it the ITV News Channel would add gravitas, executives should take a close look at what ITN laughingly calls news.

Recent cuts have hit News Channel hard. Launched 18 months ago in a blaze of publicity (and boasting that it would take Sky News to the cleaners), the 24-hour output has already been cut to 16 hours, with pre-recorded blocks replayed from 11pm until 7am. Staff cross their fingers that no story breaks out of office hours. So tight is the budget, editors have been told to spend no money. Events in Afghanistan or even across town have to be covered by a hack in the Grays Inn Road newsroom.

To mask the more obvious failings in output, some of ITN's better known faces have been ordered to take turns in front of the autocue. Fierce resistance from Dermot Murnaghan, Mary Nightingale and Katie Derham has so far won the day. But poor old John Suchet and Mark Austin haven't been so lucky.

With staff at skeleton level, quality dives and the cock-ups grow by the day. Perhaps it's no bad thing the service registers viewing figures too low to be calculated. The clever money says that unless a deal is struck before the summer, ITN will pull the plug.

THE SHOW WHERE THAMES TV...
ALLOWED SOMEONE WITH NO OBVIOUS TALENT...
Pop Idol
TO MAKE £MILLIONS...
BY WINNING FIRST PRIZE...
BY GETTING PICKED AS A JUDGE
SIMON COWELL
The Deal
WINNER WILL BE RELEASED BY MY RECORD LABEL
Ken Pyne

THE Channel 4 political awards have always been a cosy affair, but no one had any idea quite how tame the cutting-edge channel had become.

The producer of the awards booked Harry Enfield to perform a brief sketch as the Rev Tony Blair to introduce a bit of satire into the mutual back-slapping.

As soon as Enfield had begun, Sir Patrick Cormack MP, editor of *The House* magazine, the awards' co-sponsor, became apoplectic with rage. He began shouting that the depiction of Blair, the references to Enron and the war against terrorism were grotesquely offensive to everyone present. A minority of hatchet-faced MPs seemed to agree.

The buffoonish Cormack continued shouting, despite the fact that ex-speaker Betty Boothroyd told him to sit down and shut up. However, Vanni Treves, chairman of Channel 4, was also in the audience and Cormack began to shout at him instead. Treves was enormously embarrassed and as soon as Enfield finished he began a witchhunt to find someone to punish for upsetting his jolly corporate day.

Channel 4 had a top-level internal inquiry. There were calls for the producer to be sacked and demands that the entire item be cut. In the end, after huge rows, the bold, gutsy, alternative channel reached a compromise and cut the five-minute sermon down to about a minute, removing as much material offensive to the prime minister and government as possible.

BROADCASTING "is entering a new age", says the blurb for a "new media and broadcasting" conference to be hosted by the *Financial Times* next month. And one person who will certainly be influencing how it looks is speaker Christie Hefner, chairman and chief executive of Playboy Enterprises Inc.

La Hefner will talk decorously at the Inter-Continental Hotel on "business models for the focused enterprise: leveraging content in the digital domain". Back in her Playboy empire, though, things have been hotting up.

The reputation of Ms Hefner's daddy Hugh took a bit of a knock recently when a young lady who'd slept with "Hef" ungallantly told the world that the experience had been "like having sex with your gynaecologist". Christie, though, remains focused on the bottom line, as opposed to the bare bottom.

Last year she expanded her operation by acquiring three hard-core porn channels, under the name of Vivid, having lost market share to more explicit competitors. Vivid makes what scientists call "open crotch" shots, whereas Playboy previously specialised only in the now apparently passé tits 'n' ass market. According to the *LA Times*: "Playboy's strategic about-face underscores the growing acceptance of racier sex on television. Hard-core pornography has become increasingly popular and hugely profitable for satellite and cable operators, forcing Playboy to give up its singular devotion to soft-core programming."

No doubt the suits present – men like Carlton's Gerry Murphy and BT's Christopher Bland – will all prick up their ears.

CARLTON and Granada have dumped one of the last remnants of their once-feted dot.com enterprises, selling their stake in the Ask Jeeves search engine back to the American parent company for a mere £1.8m.

Back in 1998 they promised to pay £20m each for a 50 percent stake in the UK arm, although they now claim to have spent less than half that amount.

The dotcomeuppance for the two has been severe, with Carlton having closed or sold all its external websites, and Granada only retaining joint ventures with Liverpool and Arsenal. However, the loss of Ask Jeeves should probably not be viewed as a total disaster. Responding to a search for "feminist writers", the £300m loss-making site suggests "Barbara Cartland"; while a search for "unfeminist writers" comes up with, er, "the paradoxical case of Tony Blair."

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"This may well be the straw that breaks the camel's back – well, not breaks its back, but at least changes the direction in which the camel is going... Not that a straw could do that to a camel, obviously."

— Andrew Marr, BBC political editor, Today *programme, Radio 4, 14 February.*

AD NAUSEAM

SO IT's official: no one spends more on advertising in Britain than the government. Figures released last week showed that in 2001, for the first time, "new" Labour outspent such giants of mass marketing as Proctor & Gamble, Ford and BT. Wielding £143m of public money it outstripped all of the big three by at least £20m. No other company managed to spend even half as much. Stalin would be impressed.

When questioned Downing Street came over all innocent: "Are people seriously trying to say we shouldn't try to recruit more nurses or police officers, deter drink-drivers and help people quit smoking?" said an incredulous spokesman.

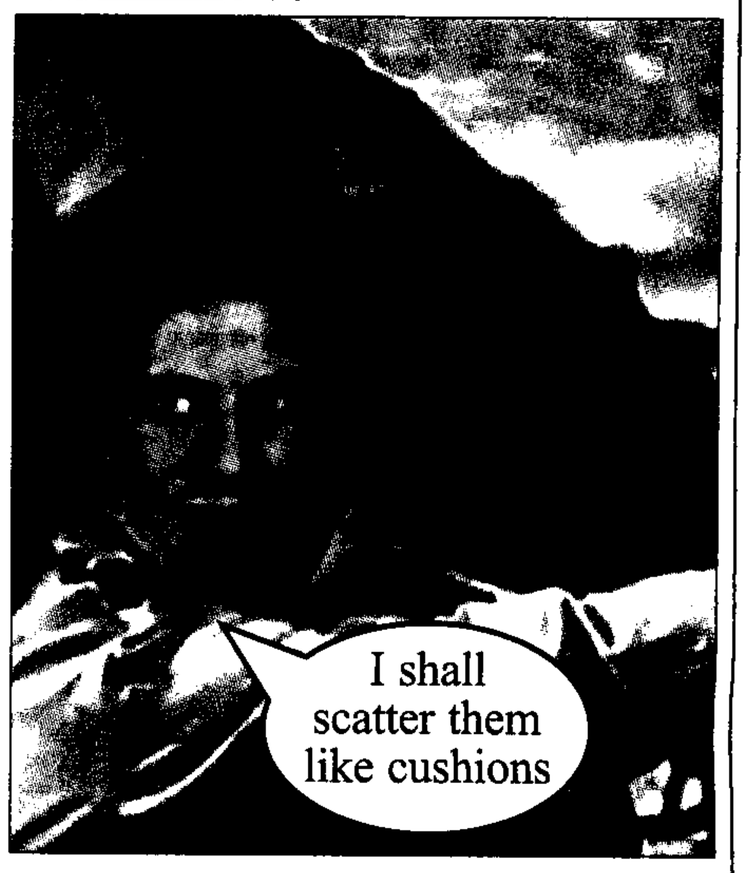
No – although the *Eye* has long maintained that there may be better means of recruitment and deterrence than endless ad campaigns. It is a well-known advertising maxim that the more you shout, the less people listen. A glut of high-impact campaigns all screaming death and damnation (for drink-drivers, smokers and internet paedophiles) or bravery and beatification (police, nurses, armed forces) are beginning to cancel each other out. All of them suggest a government that is good at telling us what they're doing, but less good at actually doing it: £143m makes lots of great TV but could probably pay for a few hospital beds as well.

It was also pointed out that a 39 percent rise in adspend was some coincidence in an election year. This too was given short shrift: "The government runs important public information campaigns. It is rubbish to suggest that public money has been used for political purposes."

Monday saw the launch of a new push asking young people to get out and vote – another dubious piece of "public information". Many will recall the 2001 Labour election poster featuring

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore



T.E. Lawrence Llewelyn-Bowen

William Hague beneath Maggie's formidable bouffant hair, but few will remember the accompanying strap: "Get out and vote". At the time, a paranoid "new" Labour was convinced that election apathy was most pronounced in the 18-23 group. If the young didn't vote, they might not get their landslide. Hence the gag with the strap. And yet less than a year later (inspired by the turnout for *Pop Idols*, no less) the same message for the same demographic is being paid-for by the Electoral Commission. A year ago this was political advertising – now it's not.

WORLD OF HYPE

"*Pop Idol* is one of the worse [*sic*] TV shows I've ever seen," Charlie Whelan declares in *PR Week* – only to confess five paragraphs later that "I have never watched *Pop Idol*".

Plugged In

But ITV and the BBC were left trailing as Sky News led the way with its own tribute, interviewing royal experts, carrying features on Margaret's life and continually updating the story throughout the day... A TV industry insider said last night: "Sky did a brilliant job. It handled a big story professionally and very quickly... As soon as the story broke they were on to it, ensuring viewers got the best coverage. When it comes to breaking news Sky proved they're the best in their field."

News of the World

Nominated by Dave Roberts.

An occasional column devoted to cross-media plugs masquerading as news.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

DOING THE ROUNDS

IN *EYE* 1044 M.D. gave the impression that the type of anaesthetic machine that contributed to the tragic death of Najiyah Hussain at Newnham General Hospital last year was now a rarity in the NHS. These machines can deliver a potentially lethal gas mixture without any oxygen at all, and in the early 80s the Canadian Society of Anaesthesiologists made it mandatory for all Canadian machines to be equipped with a mechanism to prevent the delivery of so called hypoxic gas mixtures.

However, a recent survey of 51 NHS hospitals found that 27 percent did not have an "anti-hypoxia device". Most of these were located outside theatre suites, in areas where they would be used infrequently or in emergencies, often by staff not aware of the dangers. Across the NHS, around 3,000 such machines are still in operation.

Replacement of all the machines would be expensive, but would be balanced against the huge personal and financial costs of unnecessary death or brain damage. At the very least, the pure nitrous oxide supply which caused Najiyah's death should be replaced with Entonox, the safe 50:50 mixture of nitrous oxide and oxygen given to labouring women. There are dozens more examples of disasters waiting to happen in the NHS when overstretched staff choose the wrong option. Back in 1987, M.D. nearly killed a patient after he flushed her intravenous line with potassium rather than saline, his defence being that the ampoules looked identical and were stored next to each other. Last year, plastic surgeons at Colchester general hospital mounted the same defence after mixing up a vial of water with the anaesthetic lignocaine.

This drew an unsympathetic response from Professor J.A.W. Wildsmith of Ninewells hospital in Dundee. "To blame the labelling is a diversion of personal responsibility that I find unacceptable because even in a busy plastic surgery unit, the check takes only a second... Don't whinge about the label, read it." However, with 43 percent of junior doctors still working over the agreed limit of 56 hours of actual work or 72 hours on call a week, and most consultants putting in well above their contracted hours, it would be far safer to change the labelling or storage than rely on the "personal responsibility" of the staff.

● RAISING concerns about potentially dangerous working practices and conditions is now supposed to be mandatory for NHS staff in the new no-blame culture, but it remains about as welcome as anthrax.

According to an employment tribunal, Alison Gammon, an A&E consultant at Stoke Mandeville hospital NHS trust, was "stigmatised" by the hospital for repeatedly raising her own and other staff members' concerns about a colleague's performance, and as a result has been off work herself for a year. Meanwhile, at Barnet and Chase Farm hospitals trust, chief executive Elzabeth Heyer has resigned over the backlog of 2,700 ultrasound requests, but also suspended is the consultant radiologist responsible for the list, despite his warning last year that he'd been forced to pension off an 11-year old machine and that the waiting list would increase if it wasn't replaced. It wasn't.

The staffing level of radiologists is also below the national guidelines. Across the UK, 500 doctors are currently suspended or on "gardening leave", but charges stick in only 4 percent of cases. Which is why most whistleblowers still remain anonymous.

● AT THE PFI-funded Darent Valley Hospital in Dartford, a doctor writes: "We have ridiculously few beds but this is not recognised as a real problem — we now have 'wards' in A&E, the physio dept and the daycare surgical unit, all accepting emergencies with only limited safety margins. Our routine surgery is cancelled or admitted to the patient 'hotel' hours before surgery disobeying all previously agreed safety protocols. The latest crackpot plan is to 'fiddle' the waiting list figures.

"All endoscopic procedures are now to be removed from the waiting list. It is assumed that most of these will be diagnostic – of course until they are performed it is impossible to tell whether they may proceed to a therapeutic procedure. Essentially this is just another example of 'new' Labour spin – very depressing to those of us trying to provide a safe and clinically relevant service."

M.D.

DOWN ON THE FARM

THERE is no subject in the world on which the government's spin machine finds it easier to pull the wool over the eyes of the national media than farming.

The government had another triumph recently with the media's acclaim for the Curry report on the future of farming. Businessman Sir Don Curry was assisted in his work by such farming experts as Fiona Reynolds, the former Blair apparatchick who now runs the National Trust, and Sir Peter Davies, who made such a success of his time in charge of the Prudential insurance company.

In reporting on their efforts, the prize for the most gullible hack of all went to Jonathan Porritt in the *Times*, who began by lauding the government for having the courage to set up an "independent" inquiry which might have come up with all sorts of recommendations which it found unwelcome. What Porritt didn't notice was that almost every one of Curry's recommendations faithfully parroted the line on the future of farming which has been coming out of Defra for months.

What he and the rest also missed was that Curry's recommendations have already been shown to be no more than vacuous wishful thinking. Their main thrust was that farming subsidies should be switched from supporting production to promoting environmental benefits, such as paying farmers to keep the countryside looking tidy for tourists. At this the hacks went limp with excitement. Except they didn't seem to have taken on board that this could only be achieved by a major reform of the common agricultural policy, which is out of the question until 2006 at the earliest.

But what they also didn't realise was that there has already been a first move by Brussels to reform the CAP in this direction through the rural development fund, a system which seems designed to finish off British farming more quickly than anything else. This is because the money handed over by Brussels under this fund has to be matched by equal sums contributed by national governments. In Britain's case, however, thanks to the terms of Mrs Thatcher's famous EU budget rebate, our government's contribution has to be not 50 percent but 83 percent. And at this the treasury draws the line, insisting that we should only apply for as little of these funds as possible.

The result is that Britain receives proportionately far less under this system than any other EU country. Our £230m a year is tiny compared with the £500m received by Ireland, with only a quarter the number of farmers. Germany gets more than four times as much as the UK, France five times as much. Thus, under the system favoured by Curry, Porritt and Co, British farmers are expected to survive against competitors who get anything up to eight times the amount of subsidy.

It is hardly surprising our supermarkets are rushing to stock their shelves with continental and Irish meat, milk, butter, cheese and veg, which are so much cheaper, thanks to the generosity of British taxpayers and the meanness of our own treasury. But about all this, strangely enough, that fearlessly "independent" Curry report had not a word to say.

'Muckspreader'

Down on the Fish Farm

ON Shetland, Setter Ness Salmon Ltd, which until now has displayed the Shetland Quality Salmon logo on its products, was fined £6,000 last month after pleading guilty to two charges of illegal use of the toxic chemical Ivermectin to treat sea lice infestations in cages.

Michael Smith was contact man for Setter Ness Salmon Ltd. Is he by any chance related to the Michael Smith of Wadbister Offshore Ltd whose company was fined £1,000 in April 1998 for illegal use of the toxic chemical Cypermethrin, and who promised sheriff Colin Scott Mackenzie there would be no repetition of this kind of offence?

Passing judgement on Setter Ness Salmon Ltd, the sheriff said: "Any company or individual who interferes with the natural process of the food chain has to be very careful indeed, and any breach of these controls has to be taken very seriously. However, as this is a first offence and I do not recall any of these kind in this court district, I will be lenient to a degree." And who was this "lenient" upholder of the law? Sheriff Colin Scott Mackenzie.

'Old Trout'

SIGNAL FAILURES

Exporting the risks

FRUSTRATED by their inability to manage safety, rail safety "managers" have decided the only safe railway is a road.

A new station at Beauly, near Inverness, has been ready for passengers since November; but Scotrail is not allowed to use it because health and safety executive (HSE) arse-coverers (*"officials", shurely?*) think it might pose some kind of risk. So the people who would use the station go by road.

The HSE of course doesn't care that roads are statistically more dangerous than railways because it's interested in individual systems, not the travelling public. That has been obvious in the long delays in reopening railways following accidents.

Now Railway Safety, split from Railtrack last year, wants more routes closed outright for maintenance work. Eight years after Railtrack started subcontracting rail maintenance (to companies which themselves subcontract much of the work), there is still a shocking ignorance among workers (*Eye* 1036), many of them casual labourers.

Despite a string of fines on Railtrack and subcontractors by the HSE, track workers are still being killed. The obvious solution is to bring track workers back in house, to Railtrack's replacement, and to create a stable, properly trained and supervised workforce. But it's easier to close more rail lines when work is needed.

That will mean even more rail passengers being transferred to buses. More disruption to trains will encourage people and businesses to switch permanently to cars and lorries – further increasing the risk of accidents. But increased danger on the roads doesn't count because passengers and freight are off the rail system and the rail regime can wash its hands of them.

The logic of the demands by the HSE and Railway Safety leads ultimately to complete closure of the rail network, bringing railway deaths and injuries to an acceptable zero.

'Dr B. Ching'

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

NEVER SAY DAI

INSPECTOR Dai Knacker of the fraud squad is investigating the strange case of Siân Griffiths, an unqualified administrator for Flintshire council who earned more than £100,000 in two years preparing documents for the Waterhouse inquiry into child abuse in north Wales children's homes.

Ms Griffiths, a former staffing officer for the council's social services department, was seconded to work under the supervision of Flintshire's legal director, Andrew Loveridge (*Eyes passim*). Why she was chosen is unclear, particularly as she had been involved in staff appointments to Clwyd children's homes, which meant she had knowledge of staff against whom abuse allegations had been made — surely a conflict of interest.

Ms Griffiths was promoted to M5, a senior management grade that usually entails significant staff and budgetary responsibilities, and earned £30,000 a year for the two years of the inquiry, 1997-98. This was despite the fact that the post was never advertised, that she was unqualified and had a staff of only two working for her.

In her new and demanding role Siân Griffiths did a lot of overtime — up to five hours a day, which earned her almost £2,000 a month. In the two-year period her pay was boosted to £102,000, of which £42,000 was overtime. She retired on ill-health grounds in November 1999 with a redundancy package calculated on the basis of her final year's salary of £48,000.

The lack of documentation justifying her pay aroused the interest of the council's former internal auditor, Andrew Sutton, who clashed with Andrew Loveridge after the legal chief refused to supply him with the relevant overtime forms. Surprisingly, the district auditor failed to criticise this oversight in an otherwise damning report on Flintshire last year. And Mr Sutton can no longer investigate because the council sacked him. Now it's down to Dai.

UNFAIR KOP

IN *EYE* 1011 we reported how the residents of Anfield were angry at Liverpool football club's plans to build a £100m new stadium on the city's Victorian Stanley Park. Now, not only is the community's park under threat, but their school may soon make way for a hotel and car park.

Liverpool city council plans to demolish Anfield comprehensive school and "relocate" it three miles away in the form of a privately-run "city academy", despite strong opposition from teachers and parents. The scheme has the backing, however, of Liverpool's chief executive, David Henshaw. Although Henshaw is a keen supporter of Liverpool football club, he denies this has influenced his backing for the club's redevelopment plans.

● **VICKY FERRES, chief executive of the charity Age Concern in Doncaster, has enjoyed remarkable success in the Beacon of Sleaze, taking her organisation in a few years from a single shop selling second-hand clothes to being the largest voluntary sector care provider in the borough with an income close to £2m and more than 300 employees.**

In his annual audit letter, district auditor David Brumhead refers to payments totalling £500,000 received by Age Concern in the year 2000-2001. He highlights £50,000 provided by the council for a pilot scheme in which Age Concern undertook to organise shopping for local oldies. Alas only 204 shopping visits were completed in 18 months — at a cost of some £245 per trip. Brumhead blames "inadequate checking of expenditure reimbursed by the council".

Questioned by opposition councillors, Donny social services chief Mervyn Thomas was forced to declare an interest — Ms Ferres happens to be his wife.

MAYORBALLS UPDATE

LAST October local government minister Nick Raynsford wrote to Labour-run Southwark warning the council that he would force it to hold a mayoral referendum unless it had one pronto. With little enthusiasm councillors complied, having been reminded that the Rev Blair himself had said that offering voters the chance to choose between having a mayor or a leader and cabinet run council would "reinvigorate" local government.

However, four months later, with the referendum result announced, Blair's showcase policy has proved an expensive flop. Top of the poll came those who couldn't be bothered to vote, 88.8 percent. Of the 11.2 percent who did vote, 68.6 percent rejected the mayoral option in favour of a leader and cabinet. In other words, less than 4 percent of Southwark's electorate supported "new" Labour's favoured option of a directly-elected mayor. The whole pointless exercise cost £170,000 — or £8.50 for each vote cast.

● **AT LEAST Raynsford must be cheered by the way things are going in Middlesbrough, where 84 percent of voters last year said in a referendum that they *did* want an elected mayor. Trouble is, the man they clearly want is former "zero tolerance" cop Ray Mallon, who is set to wipe the floor with the Labour party candidate in May, in the biggest electoral embarrassment for the party since Londoners voted for Livingstone two years ago. Last week Middlesbrough council's Labour leader, Ken Walker, joined Cleveland chief constable Barry "Dubya" Shaw in an astonishing attack on Mallon at a meeting of the Cleveland police authority. Shaw, egged on by Walker, claimed Mallon was a liar at the centre of "an empire of evil".**

Alas even Labour supporters look likely to vote en masse for Mallon, rather than their own lacklustre candidate, deputy council leader Sylvia Connolly. One priority for Mayor Mallon will be curbing town hall extravagance. Last year £250,000 was spent tarting up the (non-elected) mayor's parlour, while £40,000 was spent on a new Jag for the mayor — who just happens to be one Pat Walker, wife of Ken.

MEN OF STRAW

IT'S LESS than a year since Labour Blackburn council signed a £205m, 15-year deal to hand over key administrative services, including revenues and benefits, to "outsourcing specialists" Capita. The deal was accompanied by much mutual back-slapping by councillors, the local MP Jack Straw and Capita bosses.

Rod Aldridge, executive chairman of Capita, promised an "enhancement in services and how they are delivered". Just how services have been enhanced in Blackburn was revealed last week when the council's own scrutiny committee demanded that Crapita improve its performance.

Housing benefit claims now take 74 days on average to process, with fewer than half of renewal applications being processed on time. This has led to some tenants fearing eviction because they cannot pay their rent or council tax — exactly the same problems encountered in Lambeth, and reported *ad nauseam* in the *Eye*, before that council had the good sense to sack Crapita last year.

EDUCHASUN NEWZ

ESTELLE MORRIS's vigorous attacks on Timeplan, the teacher supply agency that employed schoolboy-loving Canadian supply teacher Amy Gehring, may have given the impression that the government disapproves of the firm. On the contrary. Timeplan, described by education secretary Morris as "disgraceful" in the wake of the Gehring affair, enjoys close links with "new" Labour.

One of its directors, Teresa Seabourne, was an advisor to Labour MP Chris Smith, while her fellow director, Chris King, was a longstanding Islington Labour councillor. King, who resigned as Timeplan's "director of education" over the affair, but remains a shareholding director, used to sit on the board of the Teacher Training Agency.

Timeplan's own attempt at teacher training was a complete flop. The firm was contracted to run the government's "graduate employment plan", training teachers on the job, but only managed to fill 100 out of 600 places.

The firm also recently sought an emergency injunction against home office plans to refuse to guarantee work permits for its overseas teachers beyond August. In 1993 the *Observer* published an investigative article by hack Barry Hugill warning that teacher supply agencies did not carry out proper checks on criminal records. The article quoted one agency employee as saying: "If Myra Hindley was an Australian, she could get a job as a temporary teacher." Could this possibly be the same Barry Hugill who is now a spokesman for Timeplan?

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER

YOU KNOW, QUIN, I JUST LOVE OUR SUNDAY AFTERNOONS BROWSING HERE AFTER A SATISFYING BRUNCH. THIS 1980s PRESSED-STEEL BATH IS SO PERIOD!
EVERYWHERE YOU LOOK THERE'S SOMETHING TO TANTALISE THE SENSES - LOOK AT THIS 1960s PLASTIC TOILET CISTERN!
I'VE WARNED YOU TWO BEFORE - YOU NEED A PERMIT TO BE ON COUNCIL PROPERTY
ISLINGTON MUNICIPAL DUMP

Number crunching

7 ■ Major changes to examination structure since inception of GCSEs

7 ■ Different Secretaries of State for Education since inception of GCSEs

7 ■ Rounds of public examinations recommended for each pupil up to the age of 18

NOOKS and CORNERS

DERBY has long been careless with its architectural assets. Back in the 1960s, it allowed Hugh Casson to remove the Georgian Assembly Rooms to make way for a horrible new Civic Centre; more recently I lamented the proposal to destroy the excellent 1930s bus station. Now I learn of a threat to demolish a particularly interesting and unusual group of Georgian buildings – as if enough has not gone already.

The principal threatened building is Brown's spar manufactory, built in King Street from 1800 onwards. This was a marble works, set up by Richard Brown with a Boulton & Watt steam engine, to manufacture chimneypieces, monuments and other objects out of polished fluorspars and limestones. One of Brown's first important commissions was to produce chimneypieces, urns and obelisks for Kedleston, the great Adam house nearby. Next to the works is the "Museum" or showroom, and attached is Brown's own house and part of a public swimming bath constructed before 1829 by Brown's successor. Next to that is the former wrought iron works of the Arts & Crafts manufacturer Edwin Haslam, built in 1882, and next to that a Regency public house.

This group of buildings – including the only surviving purpose-built marble works in Britain – is now threatened (again) by a road. They were all going to be swept away back in the 1960s for a slip road to the inner ring road. The ring road is one of Derby's greatest disasters: it destroyed St Alkmund's Square, doomed St Alkmund's Church and left St Marie's, the Roman Catholic church by the great Pugin, teetering on the edge of a roaring, fume-filled concrete chasm. Work to complete this wretched road, which cuts off the north of Derby from the centre, was abandoned in 1969 owing to the cost. But since 1996 Derby city council has been a unitary authority and can get hold of central government money to build more roads. And, as we know, for all its mendacious posturing in favour of public transport, the "new" Labour government loves cars.

No application to build this gratuitous slip road has yet been lodged, and in October 2000 Derby Civic Society applied to the department of culture, media 'n' sport for the marble works and the other buildings to be spot-listed: scarcely an unreasonable request given their interest and charm.

Furthermore they stand opposite St Helen's House, a building of 1767 listed grade I. However, although another simultaneous application to spot list was dealt with by the DCMS in six weeks, there has been a long silence about the marble works. Can it really take the department – and English Heritage – so long to make up their minds? Or is someone trying to make up their minds for them? The trouble is that Derby city council wants its dual-carriageway – its conservation officer (at least it has one) felt obliged to rubbish the Civic Society's research on the buildings – and it is of the same political persuasion as its two MPs (one is a former leader of the council; the other Margaret Beckett) and thus as the government. And we all know what "new" Labour thinks about historic buildings.

Derby: Losing its marbles?

TALKING of listing and the inconsistency of the DCMS, there is also the curious case of C.S. Lewis's house in the suburbs of Oxford. This is not a great work of architecture, for it is a 1920s bungalow; but the author lived there for some 30 years and wrote most of his best-known books in it.

In recent years the C.S. Lewis Foundation has bought and maintained the house and recently applied for it to be listed. English Heritage strongly supported the idea, pointing out that the house retains alterations made to it by Lewis himself. But the DCMS has rejected the application, arguing that the bungalow is not of the highest architectural interest.

Nobody ever said it was: the point is that it was the home of Lewis. Buildings are listed, after all, for architectural and/or historical interest – that is what the act states – and many houses are listed because of the fame of former occupants. Indeed, for many people historical associations are more important than architectural quality and, with both English Heritage and the government concerned to demonstrate that the protection of historic architecture is popular and meaningful, C.S. Lewis's house might seem an ideal candidate.

Thousands, perhaps millions of children have enjoyed the Narnia books, so Lewis is scarcely obscure. Surely the listing has not been turned down by the minister herself, Baroness Blackstone, former principal of Birkbeck College, London? Surely Tessa does not consider him unimportant and must have heard of him? But this decision scarcely encourages confidence in the judgement of the DCMS, the arm of government which is the ultimate guardian of whatever we think is heritage. English Heritage merely advises; but it is hard to understand why its informed advice has been ignored.

'Piloti'

I-SPY *Farnham, Surrey*

Submitted by Ian R. Searle. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

POLICE 5

READERS will be delighted to learn that the case of police sergeant Gurpal Virdi, which has been dragging on for four years to the intense distress and embarrassment of the officer and his wife, has at last been settled.

Sgt Virdi has dropped his unfair dismissal case against the Metropolitan police and has received £90,000 in compensation in addition to the £150,000 he won from a tribunal that found him the victim of race discrimination. He has returned to the police and is now working in its community relations division.

His case has been reported from first to last in the *Eye*, and three questions remain to be answered by the police complaints authority (PCA) and senior investigating officers from the West Midlands police.

1. What action, if any, will be taken against the three Metropolitan police commanders, Cullen, Shave and James, who unanimously found Mr Virdi guilty of sending racist mail to himself and others from Ealing police station? Their decision, badly-argued and based on the most slender evidence, was torn to shreds by an employment tribunal. Shave and James are still serving in the highest ranks of the force.

2. What action, if any, will be taken against former deputy commissioner Mike Todd, who on the night of the commanders' crass judgement went on television to denounce Sgt Virdi in the most lurid terms, describing him as "disreputable"? Mr Todd has since been promoted to assistant commissioner.

3. Who sent out the racist mail? Are they still in the police and, if so, should they remain so?

AFTER nearly four years Sheffield United football fans are to be compensated for the horrific attack on them by members of Greater Manchester police in a pub near the city's Piccadilly station after a Worthington Cup semi-final match in 1998.

Baton-wielding GMP officers invaded the pub and laid about them causing widespread injury and distress. After prolonged legal action, the force has accepted responsibility and agreed to pay compensation of between £10,000 and £15,000 per fan, amounting to more than £100,000. In a grovelling statement, GMP said: "We do not tolerate the type of despicable behaviour in evidence on this occasion."

So what is to happen to the offending officers? Nothing. Somehow the hawk-eyed detectives of Manchester CID have been unable to identify a single officer responsible for the attack. "We sincerely regret," the statement continued, "that those responsible for this incident have not been identified."

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS BY BIRCH

I think the ICA was too hard on Ivan Massow, sacking him like that.
But he slagged off contemporary art!
Freedom of speech...
He attacked poor Tracey personally!
She can take it...
And he said that the market for our work had declined!
What?? He should have been shot!!

Letters

Writer's block

Sir,

Can I apologise on behalf of the reviewer who heaped praise on my number-one bestseller Fame Fatale, to Wendy Holden, the writer behind Anthea Turner's 2000 autobiography and another person altogether?

I hope Wendy finds it in herself to forgive the error, not to mention the unflattering comparison with me.

That's the trouble with Wendy Holdens – you wait ages for one and then two come along at the same time.

Yours in decline,
WENDY HOLDEN,

(The one who is the author of Simply Divine, Bad Heir Day, Pastures Nouveaux and Fame Fatale, all available from Headline books)

At sea over Iris

Sir,

Your reviewer is, of course, entitled to his low opinion of Iris Murdoch's novels. For me, The Sea, The Sea is an excellent book, and certainly far better than most recent winners of the Booker Prize. The same goes for many of her novels. What your reviewer cannot say is that she "went mad". Alzheimer's disease is emphatically ***not*** *a mental illness. A schizophrenic friend of mine had a psychotic breakdown last year;* ***he****, if one were to adopt the sensitive and humane phraseology of your reviewer, "went mad".*

Yours faithfully,
D.F. KING,

St Albans, Herts.

Publish and be dammed

Sir,

"More Dam Friends" (8 February) seriously misrepresents the position of the export credits guarantee department in relation to the Yusufeli Dam Project in Turkey.

Under their terms of reference, the export guarantees advisory council and its chairman Liz Airey are not involved in any way in assessing the applications for ECGD support or in providing advice to ministers on prospective projects.

ECGD does not give "grants" to fund export projects. It provides insurance to UK exporters, in return for premium. In doing so, it helps to support thousands of jobs across the UK.

For the record, ECGD has made no decisions about supporting AMEC's proposed part in the Yusufeli project. ECGD support would only be offered if key impacts – including social, environmental and human rights factors – are properly addressed.

Yours sincerely,
VIVIAN BROWN,

Chief Executive, Export Credits Guarantee Dept.

Complaints don't add up

Sir,

As an Upper Sixth former (or member of year 13 if you prefer), I wish to make some points about the exam board Edexcel.

My first point refers to the Edexcel "Impossible Question" (which was on an exam paper I sat this January). I wish to point out that all the reporting I have seen of this paper has been entirely incorrect. There was no question in the question paper that was any way incorrect in its details. However, Decision Maths is based mostly on graph theory, and so to reduce the amount of time that students would have to spend copying the graphs which are in the question sheet, an answer booklet is supplied with the paper to work on, with the graphs reproduced. It was in this reproduction that the error occurred; indeed, perhaps, the only place an error such as this could occur. Papers are checked many times over, in each case independently of each other test, and any errors in the questions would quickly become apparent. The answer papers, I suspect, would only have the briefest proof reading, as it is not essential in doing the questions on the paper itself. Hence an error was made.

People who say that they spend "ages" trying to complete this question committed one of the most easily avoidable exam errors, and indeed one that is counselled against on the cover of all exam papers: that of not reading the question.

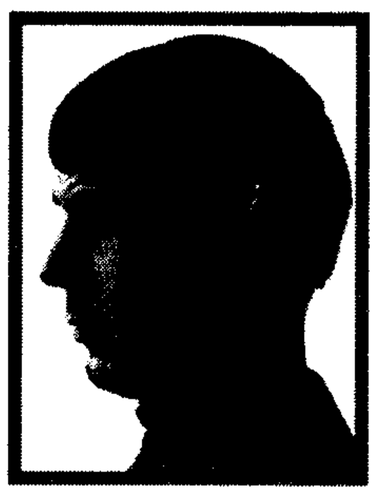
Secondly, I must mention a point that most people calling for the removal of Edexcel as an examining body seem to have forgotten. Each of the boards publishes its own textbooks, which are to be used for only the course for which it was written. If Edexcel is removed, then schools would have to replace all of their Edexcel textbooks; I go to a small school (of around 300 pupils), and we have well over £1,000 worth of Edexcel books in mathematics alone; given that most schools are under-funded as it is, I doubt that many could afford to replace all the text books at this stage, especially as many of them have been in print for under two years.

Yours faithfully,
MARK LAWRENCE,

Via email.

Lookalike

Spock



Prince Charles

Sir,

I wonder why Time magazine declined to publish David Hockney's portraits of Prince Charles, as recently released for auction. Surely, Time readers could have discerned that the accompanying article's references to aloof aliens, who only occasionally interbreed with the human race, were nothing to do with Mr Spock from Star Trek?

Yours faithfully,
STEVE ELLIS,

London E17.

...oh yes they do!

Sir,

Branding Edexcel as an "incompetent British exam board" (Eye 1047) is an understatement. They are pathetic, disgraceful and lacking the ability to write exam papers.

The inaccuracy of these exam papers raises the question – can they actually answer the questions themselves? Do they actually have qualifications or are they all as dense as Estelle Morris?

I'm a 17-year-old Business (AVCE) and government and politics (A level) student who has just last month taken a business law exam by Edexcel and can anybody guess as to what cock-up they made? They missed vital information out from a question making it unanswerable. Lucky for me the exam board had spotted the mistake after a mere few thousand papers had been produced and issued a feeble apology entitled Erratum Notem, which explained the mistake and included the correct information for the question. I was one of the lucky ones.

KRISTEN BROWN,

Cheshire.

'Vivacious' was the word most often used, and there were repeated mentions of the fact that she actually had a fine brain, even though she had not been allowed to go to university, these being the days when clever young aristocratic women were considered intellectual if they finished a course in cat-maintenance.

Observer (on Princess Margaret)

Society not to blame

Sir,

In your piece, Down on the Farm (1045) you quite rightly draw attention to concerns over the manner in which millions of farm animals were slaughtered as a result of the foot and mouth outbreak.

You claim animals were killed in flagrant breach of animal welfare laws and that the number of criminal breaches of the 1994 animal welfare regulations probably ran into thousands. You claim lambs had their brains beaten out, piglets were smashed to death with shovels and men were blazing away at cattle with shotguns. You may be right, but where is your evidence?

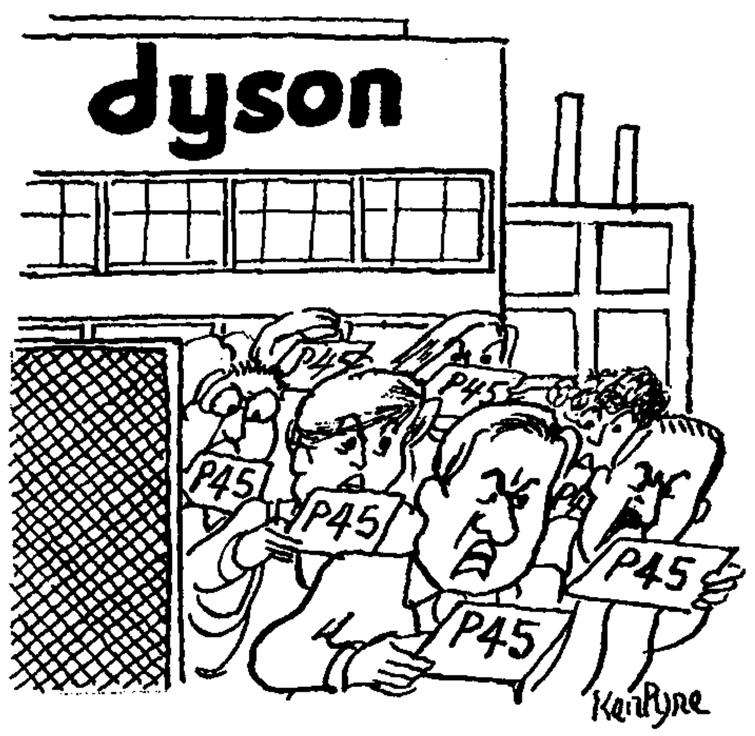
Due to the restrictions in place, in the vast majority of cases, it simply was not possible for the RSPCA to get evidence in support of allegations of this type. The only people with any direct knowledge of what took place when animals were being slaughtered were those that were involved. Unsurprisingly, they were not overly keen to incriminate themselves and consequently the RSPCA was not able to substantiate such claims. In an attempt to get hold of reliable, first hand accounts of such incidents, the RSPCA called upon farmers to come forward if they had concerns regarding the way in which their animals were killed. Despite this, there were few incidences that the society was able to pursue.

The incident in Monmouthshire, which you mention in your article, was almost unique in that it was witnessed and videoed by members of the public. The allegation was very serious indeed and that is why the RSPCA initiated the criminal investigation – you are wrong therefore to suggest the RSPCA took over the prosecution from another agency. We established that one ewe did in fact suffer, but could not prove those responsible were criminally liable. We were concerned about the circumstances and sought the advice of a senior criminal barrister. His advice was that the local justices would not be able to convict under the current legislation.

You accuse the RSPCA of taking desultory interest in the very serious allegations there have been. This is plainly not the case.

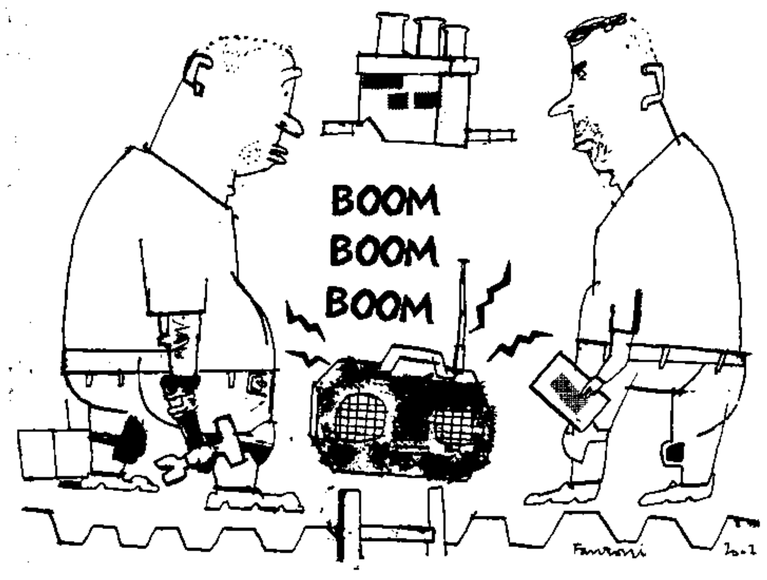
Yours faithfully,
ANN GRAIN,

Head of Press, RSPCA.



"It sucks"

Scenes You Seldom See (4)



"Should we turn it down a bit?"

Cornish pasted

Sir,

Thank heavens somebody has rumbled the disaster which Fiona Reynolds is unleashing. Here in the Cornish region, Fiona is trying to "Devonwall" the NT. This is an archaic practice pursued by Thatcherite bureaucrats and centralist politicos who, gazing out from their rarefied garrets suddenly become alphabetically challenged and try to create a cultural and administrative marriage of Devon and Cornwall which experience tells us is bound to end in tears.

Senior and extremely good staff are being "retired". The amazingly successful Cornish region is being shoved into a "Devonwall territory" which will inevitably lead to the re-emergence of all those ignorances and practices which so nearly ruined the trust in Cornwall. We have tried to tell her. The chairman's replies read like the blurb from some American management manual. Morale is rock-bottom. Fiona has refused to listen to her own internal reviewers, to her members, to key partners.

So, well done, Piloti. Many people seem to have a go at you. On this occasion, blowing the whistle on Fiona the Crony is just what is needed.

BERT BISCOE,

Via email.

Lookalike

Orc

Bowyer

Sir,

Please find enclosed photographs of the mild-mannered association footballer, Lee Bowyer, and an unnamed actor from a recent Hollywood blockbuster. I was struck by the similarities between the two. Do you think they might be related?

Yours faithfully,
RONNIE JONES,

Coulsdon, Surrey.

German for beginners

Sir,

A glance at the website of the disputed "Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik" (www.swp-berlin.org) reveals that Michael Jones (Letters, 1047) was in this case as mistaken as "Brussels Sprouts" and I had been. The translation provided there on the English language page is, surprisingly, "Foundation for International Politics and Security" – apparently little to do with wisdom or science. So a little research might have spared us all some blushes. But thanks for the help with my German anyway Mr Jones.

Yours,
DANIEL BELL,

Berlin.

Church notes

Sir,

Re: Football and Mouth and Tim Russell's letter (1047). Mr Russell can say what he likes about Piloti's and the Eye's attitude to football – and he does – but he is offside when he claims that "more people visit football stadia than visit... obscure rural churches".

Unlike Manchester United (so I am told), we have a strong local fan base. On average 1.3 million people worship weekly in Church of England churches (and nearly two million different individuals every month), rather more than the 600,000 in League stadia each week. Add to the fact that listed church buildings receive more tourist visits than all other categories of listed buildings put together and we don't do too badly.

Our country's churches and cathedrals, with the local people who fill and care for them, do more for the life of our communities and for the valuable tourist economy than many people credit. The competitive might even say more than our football teams.

But then, Mr Russell won't be able to contest this. He isn't going to buy the Eye any more.

Yours,
STEPHEN BOWLER,

Council for the Care of Churches.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"At that pace he was always going to hit it or miss it."
JOHN VIRGO, BBC1
(Jim Curran)

"The FA Cup is still domestically the best cup in the world."
GLENN HODDLE, Radio 5 Live
(Richard Mott)

"He's got his legs back, of course, or his leg – he's always had one but now he's got two."
BOBBY ROBSON (on Alan Shearer), **Teletext**
(Peter Finan)

"Moses Kiptanui – the 19-year-old Kenyan who turned 20 a few weeks ago..."
DAVID COLEMAN
(J. Crossley)

"At the end of the day in the morning there's not much else a teacher can do if the child doesn't turn up for school."
ESTELLE MORRIS, Radio 4
(Alun Morris)

"Oh look! It's Icarus's Black Box"

Arsenal about face

Sir,

Is the Arsenal crowd described by Tim Russell as "one of the most placid and well-behaved in the country" apparently because it is "well-heeled" (Letters, 1047) the same Arsenal crowd who have recently been involved in coin throwing on to the pitch and were described in the national press by a long term but now former attender of their games as having an attitude of blind contempt and brutishness? I think we should be told.

Yours sincerely,
ROBERT BIDDULPH,

Surbiton, Surrey.

Sir,

Unfortunately for Tim Russell, he is incorrect when he says that "no English league ground has hosted a pop concert since Oasis played at Maine Road in 1995". Bon Jovi played at the Britannia Stadium in Stoke in August 2000. Whether this is sufficient to back up Piloti's claim that football stadia are "increasingly used for pop concerts", I don't know. Perhaps they're both wrong.

DOUGAL McKINNON,

Via email.

Sir,

So Tim Russell asserts that "no English League soccer ground has hosted a pop concert since Oasis played at Maine Road in 1995".

Funny that – I must have imagined working on the Simply Red concert a couple of miles down the road in MUFC's Old Trafford stadium on 29 June 1996 – at the end of 'Euro '96'!

MIKE RENSHALL,

Via email.

Those apostrophes in full

Sir,

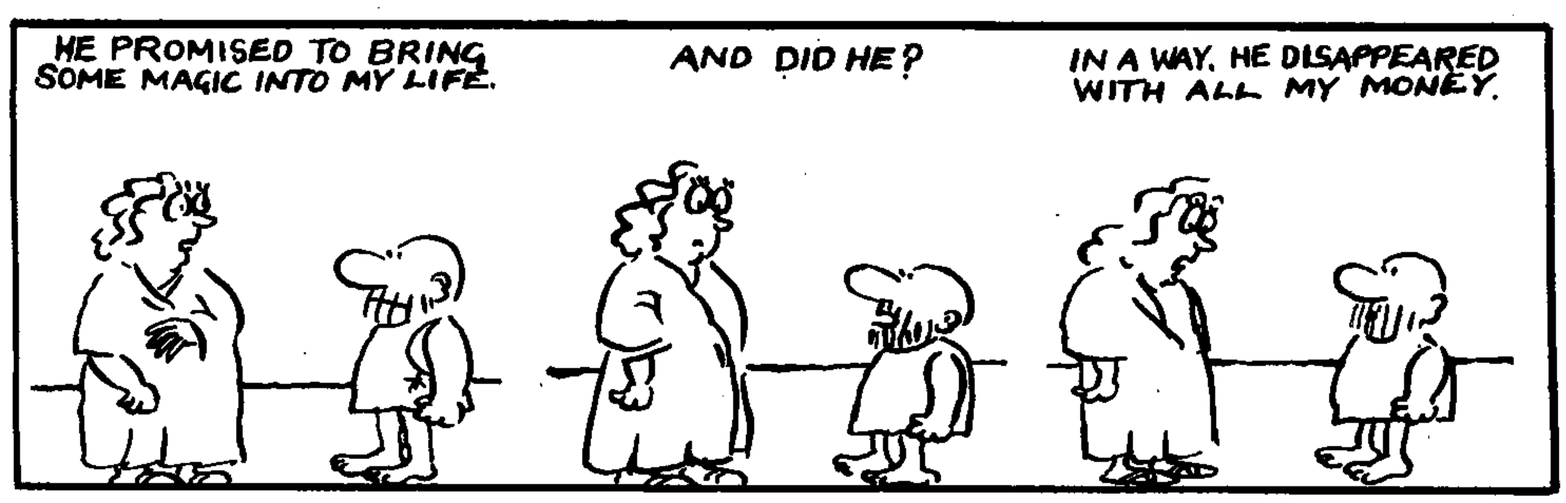
Would it be overly anal to highlight the fact that the section of your letters page of 8 February titled "Pedants Corner" lacked a much-needed apostrophe?

Yes. I thought so. Sorry.

Yours,
ED POWLES,

Via e-mail.

HOM SAP



Letter from **Harare**
from Our Own Correspondent

IT'S BEEN hell in Zimbabwe. An evil minority regime clings to power, cocking a snook at the world, seizing farmland, intimidating the judiciary, expelling reporters, blowing up opposition newspaper presses, using torture, intimidation and assassination. Just like the old days of white Rhodesia in fact – only Smithy was much better at it and the Tories were on his side.

It's not all bad news, though; at least not for foreign hacks who can get six times the official value of the Zimbabwe dollar on the black market. There are almost as many of them posing as tourists as the real thing, from old hands last here in the glorious 1970s and having a final trot around the paddock, to keen youngsters with Sony mini-wotsits making TV documentaries.

Muggers still thinks he will win next month's presidential election despite food shortages – maize meal, cooking oil, milk – and clinics without medicines. But having cracked enough heads to show he means business, he may now ease off, believing that opposition supporters will be too fearful to vote in strength.

Spare a thought for the wretched EU election monitors, stuck beside the swimming pool at Harare's Monomatara Hotel while they await accreditation. Had the pompous Swede Pierre Schori, who heads the troupe, held his tongue, they just might have been allowed to go about their business, but Schori, much to the irritation of his colleagues, was determined to speak out against the beastly regime and was promptly deported.

We all agree Mugabe is bonkers. He thinks you Brits reneged on promises to be generous when it came to buying out our white farmers. Sucker! Kenya, which had fewer than 1,000 white farmers, was paid twice as much to get rid of them as Zimbabwe, which had 5,000 when Zanu-PF won the elections before independence in 1980. This peeves the old fool, but that's history…

Barring massive stuffing of the ballot boxes, our leader's advisers have told him he'll he lucky to get 40 percent of the vote, intimidation, etc, notwithstanding. But recovering from Mugabe will be as tough as getting rid of him. He's sold not only our seed corn, but the whole store: mortgaged our gold reserves, borrowed against future gold production, run up a huge fuel bill and passed the hat round our three remaining "friends" – Libya, Malaysia and Indonesia. On top of that the rains have been poor and the crop forecast is grim.

There's growing doubt as to whether Morgan Tsvangirai, leader of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change, gullible victim of a secretly video taped "plot to assassinate Mugabe" can cope. The London PR outfit Weber Shandwick, through its recently acquired associate, GJW, continues to advise him. They would not know democracy if it bit them in the balubas – other African clients include models of probity Angola and Sudan.

The fund-raisers for the MDC are an interesting bunch. Some are white Zimbabweans who live abroad; some have commercial stakes in our part of the world. Other supporters include luminaries such as David Hale, prominent US banker, and Sir Robin Renwick, ex-HMG's ambassador to Pretoria and Washington during the Thatcher era and now Lord Renwick.

Whatever happened, by the way, to Peter Longworth, the British high commissioner in Harare before Brian Donnelly, the chap who is here now? His reporting was dreadful, we gather. Completely missed the early signs of trouble brewing and relied too much on his own military advisers. Like all military folk, they preferred to mix with their local army counterparts rather than normal people, and were inclined to see our crippling military involvement in Congo/Zaire as a good, stabilising thing. This was part of the reason for the arms sanctions fiasco a couple of years ago. Remember? Your Tony Blair overruled Robin Cook and Peter Hain, and continued to supply spare parts (made in Britain) to Zimbabwe's air force — until even he saw the light.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

O "We're on a mission for the Pentagon," Dr Pamela Dalton told reporters at a press conference in Philadelphia, "and our goal is a simple one. To concoct a stench so repellent that it will panic and disperse enemy troops who catch even the faintest whiff of it, and disable anyone unlucky enough to inhale it directly."

Dr Dalton, who is leading the research project at the Monell Chemical Senses Center in Philadelphia, explained how she had approached the task. "There are some well-known offensive smells that occur naturally, such as rotten eggs, but they just aren't powerful enough to repel enemy troops. We produced some quite unpleasant sulphurous odours in the laboratory, and also simulated the putrid smell of excrement, but none was sufficiently strong to cause chaos on the battlefield. The reaction to burning hair was disappointing too, because although some people found it nauseating, others said it smelt like dinner.

"So far, the most effective smell we've discovered is a concentrated mixture of excrement, rotting flesh, and newspaper printing ink. In tests, it has induced an immediate physical reaction, with shortness of breath, nausea, retching, dilated pupils, a rapid heart rate, and an overwhelming desire to get away from the source as quickly as possible. We reckon we can still improve on it, but within a couple of years the US army should have a very effective but thoroughly harmless method of battlefield control and crowd dispersal in its armoury." *(Chemical & Engineering News, January 2002. Spotter: Michael Plumber)*

— O —

O *"What happened to this passenger was a freak accident," a spokesman for Scandinavian Airways told reporters in Oslo, "and we are still investigating the details. However, it seems that during a flight to New York on one of our Boeing 767s, she went to the lavatory, and pushed the flush button before getting up from the toilet seat.*

"These lavatories have a high-pressure vacuum flush mechanism, and it appears to have sealed her lower body to the toilet seat, leaving no room for air to get into the bowl. She could not get up by herself, and had to remain seated there, shouting, for several hours, until the flight had landed. Once on the ground, she was carried off the aircraft, still attached to the seat. But once we'd got her into the hanger, airport technicians were able to release the valve, enabling her to get loose. The passenger has filed a complaint with our airline, and has requested anonymity, so our lawyers have instructed us not to reveal any more details at this time." (VerdensGang [Norway], 21/102. Spotter: Neil Goodwin)

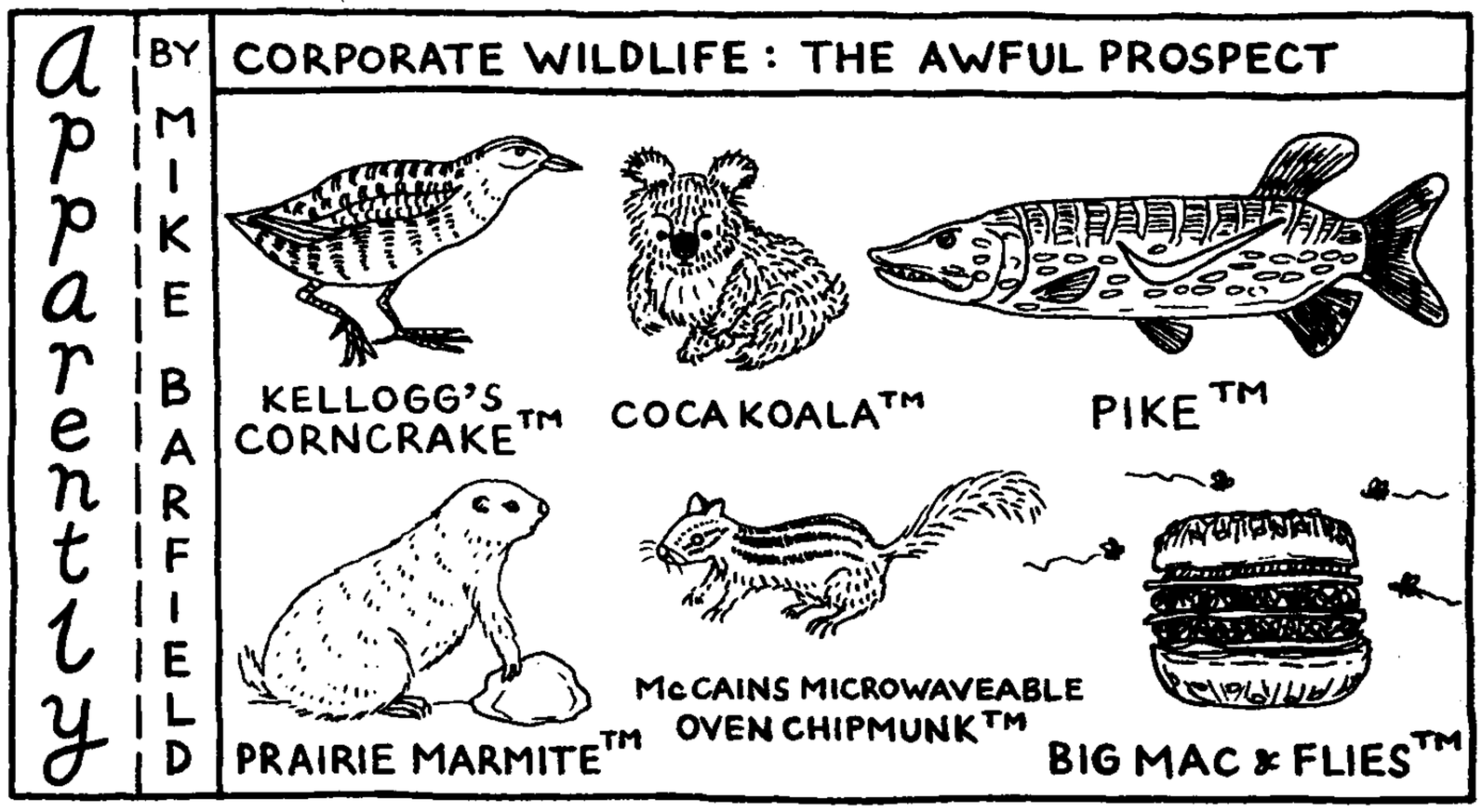
— O —

O "What clearer demonstration could there be of the need for greater responsibility in Hollywood?" a hospital spokesman asked during a press conference in Boise, Idaho. "What has happened to Mr Emburger proves beyond doubt that producers need to consider the effects that their films may be having on the public, especially on young and impressionable people."

The medical warning was issued following an incident which led to seventeen-year-old Dwight Emburger being rushed to Boise Hospital, with serious burns to his penis and groin. "Mr Emburger tells us that he had been to see the film 'American Pie,' and had been greatly impressed by a scene in which one of the male stars had sexual intercourse with a

warm apple pie. He decided to try this for himself, and bought a large apple pie from his local diner. Unfortunately, he didn't read the warning on the cardboard wrapper, which stated that the fillings in these pies can be extremely hot, even though the outside is merely warm. Nor did he did allow sufficient time for the interior to cool before making a small hole and attempting coitus. Once he discovered that the filling was red-hot, he withdrew his penis immediately, but the apple filling was extremely viscous. And by the time he had washed it off with cold water, serious skin and tissue damage had been sustained."

Before ending the conference, the spokesman added, "I don't wish to cramp a producer's style, but potentially dangerous scenes such as these really should be subtitled. If they carried a simple health warning, reading 'do not try this at home,' then the medical profession would have no quarrel." *(Boise Sentinel, 18 January 2002. Spotter: Anon)*



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo,

I am sure you will all have given up something for Lent!

I was determined this year to give up getting angry with people, and to try to be more tolerant and forgiving towards all those parishioners who annoy me with their stupid and unnecessary criticisms!

But I have to confess that the cynics and the moaners and the wreckers have become so vociferous that all my good Lenten resolutions have fallen on stony ground, through no fault of my own!

No sooner have we finished with all the nonsense about Mr Enron and the church heating system than the gossip-mongers and peddlars of tittle-tattle have come up with some stupid new story about my friend Mr Mittal.

And may I say first of all that he is not my friend, and I have never referred to him as such.

Indeed, when I wrote a letter to help him in this business, I was very careful to cross out the words "my friend" just in case people got the wrong idea, i.e. that he was my friend just because he had given £125,000 to help me run the parish!

I want to make it clear that there was no connection whatever between the writing of the letter and the giving of the cheque!

As it says in the Good Book, "It is more blessed to receive than to give." *(Revelations of St John the Major.)*

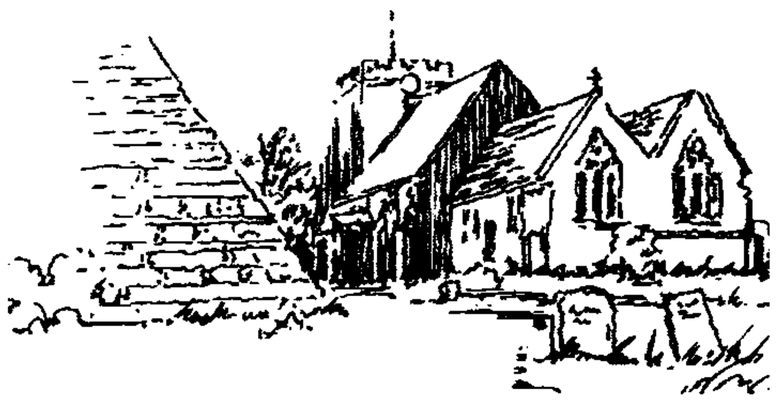
There is only one word to describe this kind of malicious slander, and that is "garbage" – from the Greek "garbos", meaning "the truth".

Has everyone forgotten what I said when I came to this parish?

I said that I had come as a new broom, to sweep away all the sleaze and corruption which were only too familiar under my predecessors.

We don't want to go back to those days, do we, when several members of the PCC were sent to prison and the rest should have been!

Things are very different now, aren't they? We have new rules about all



donations to parish funds, which I have introduced, and if it hadn't have been for those, nobody would even have heard of my friend Mr Mittal, who, incidentally, has done so much to encourage local business in the parish, even though his offices are on some island in the West Indies and he doesn't currently employ anyone in St Albion's.

So let's hear no more of this hoo-ha on stilts, shall we?

There are surely more important things for us all to be thinking about during this Lent-tide! (Or "The Pre-Easter Time Period", as Mr Birt has recommended we should call it.)

That's why if any of you have not yet given anything up, here's a suggestion for you.

Why not give up criticising the Vicar?

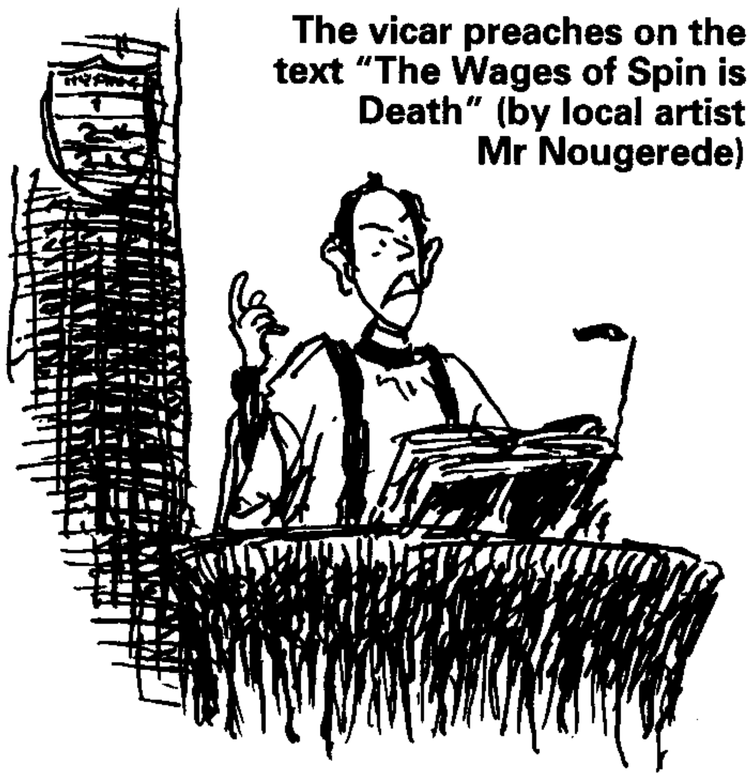
Yours in hope,

Tony

A Special Message To All Our English Co-Religionists

from The Rev. Dubya Bush, First Church of Latter-Day Morons

"Brothers and Sisters in the Lord, I tell you the day is at hand, that day of which we read in the mighty book of the Prophet Enron, when the Great Satan shall arise, spreading his axis of evil over all the world. And note how close the word 'Satan' is to 'Saddam'. Is that a coincidence? I think not, brethren! I ask you all to join with me, along with your pastor, my good friend Rev. Blair, to take up the sword and cast out these Satanic devils as they deserve. For it is written, 'Go forth and kick ass. Thus saith the Lord.' And if he doesn't, then I do! God bless America and no one else. Here endeth the world."



The vicar preaches on the text "The Wages of Spin is Death" (by local artist Mr Nougerede)

To Remember In Your Prayers

● Mr Vaz, who has been asked not to attend services for a month, for refusing to answer the perfectly polite question put to him by Mrs Filkin – "Is it true that you are a crook?" Let us pray that Mr Vaz is granted an early release from all the suffering he has caused us in his life, and is taken from us to a place of rest from which he will never return. T.B.

—Valete

We were very sorry to say goodbye to Ms Jo Moore who decided to resign at the weekend after a number of burials went wrong. It is a great shame that she is having to retire now rather than three weeks ago.

We wish her every success in her obscurity. A.C.

SPICE GIRL: The vicar's wife opens the biggest Cash 'n' Curry Emporium in the parish. Let's hope it doesn't get her into "a pickle" about "currying favours" and trying to "vinda-election"!

Lent Talks

✳ Mrs Morris gave a very interesting talk on the theme of "Vocations In Today's Society". She began by saying that many children had no natural aptitude for academic subjects, and, instead of being forced to take 'A' Levels in them, just to get useless A* grades, they should be allowed to follow their vocation.

This could include such practical callings as Soap Opera Studies, the Management of Lap-Dancing Establishments, the Retailing of Sports Goods, and the Design of Mobile Phone Covers, all of which have a vital part to play in today's vibrant, skill-based, multi-cultural society. Sesame Toast and Prawn Crackers were served in honour of Chinese New Year. The two pupils from St Albion's Comprehensive who served the delicacies were awarded top grades in three modules of their Oriental Catering 'A' Level course.

Parish Entertainment

CHURCH HALL 8.00PM

'An Evening With Mr Benn'

Mr Benn relives his long career in the parish and answers questions about how badly the vicar is running things now. (4 hours 24 minutes)

Not suitable for children or adults. A.C.

LORD HOLLICK TO RUN SOUTH BANK

by Our Arts Correspondent **Elizabeth Hall**

THE Prime Minister's friend Lord Hollick is to take charge of the crisis-ridden Arts Complex on the South Bank.

Following his success in running the Daily Express, Lord Hollick has announced the following exciting 5-point plan to transform London's premier cultural venue.

1. Sell it all off to Richard "Dirty" Desmond.

2. Festival Hall to become Lap-Dancing Centre.

3. Hayward Gallery to exhibit hardcore pornography, featuring Asian Babes, etc.

4. National Theatre to be turned into a warehouse for unsold copies of *OK!* magazine.

5. Er... That's it.

MOORE TRIED TO BURY NEWS

by Our Media Staff
Conrad Blackarmband

THE EDITOR of the Telegraph, Mr Charles Moore, tried to use the occasion of Princess Margaret's funeral to "bury" important news stories. Moore devoted 94 pages of the Daily Telegraph to coverage of the Princess's death in order not to have to run any stories about anything important.

This is not the first time that Moore has been guilty of burying the news. Last month he caused a furore when he used a huge picture of Dame Judi Dench to bury the news that the Telegraph hasn't got any stories *(cont'd. p. 94)*

THAT JOAN COLLINS WEDDING BREAKFAST IN FULL

What you didn't eat

Mutton Dressed As Lamb

or

Old Trout

or

No Spring Chicken

– ❋ –

To follow

Divorce

Those Joan Collins Vows In Full

Vicar: Do you take this cheque for £400,000?

Collins: OK.

Vicar: You may now kiss your husband goodbye.

SUNDAY TIMES INSIGHT SPECIAL

The chain of events that led to the biggest scandal the world has ever seen.

Thursday 8.25am Martin Sixpence, the Head of Paperclips at the Department of Transport sends an e-mail to his colleague Jo Mooron, Special Adviser to the Special Adviser to Stephen Byebye, Secretary of State for Transport. The explosive e-mail advises Mooron not to issue any press releases on Friday even if she wasn't thinking of doing so.

Thursday 12.00pm The e-mail is leaked to the highly influential political correspondent of the Daily Moron, Paul Glasses. When the story appears, it causes a sensation.

Friday 7.10am A plainly shaken Jo Mooron denies the e-mail ever existed. She is supported by Stephen Byebye, who says he will stand by her.

Friday 2.30pm A distinctly rattled Robin Cook tells the House that there was never any e-mail from Sixpence and even if there was, no one had ever seen it. He promises that the Government will stand by Mooron and Sixpence.

Friday 4.00pm As the scandal continues unabated, the Prime Minister steps in to deny that anyone ever denied that an e-mail had been sent. He promises to stand by Cook, Mooron and Sixpence, unless something else happens.

Saturday 6.30am Something else happens. The text of the e-mail is printed in full in the Indescribablyboring newspaper. It reads, "Jo, have you got enough paperclips in your department?"

Saturday 5.00pm Everyone resigns (except for Blair).

COURT CIRCULAR

TWICKENHAM

Saturday: Mourning for HRH the Princess Margaret continues. As a mark of respect, their Royal Highnesses Prince William and Prince Harry went to the rugby match at Twickenham between England and Ireland. They were accompanied by the Royal Inebriant-In-Waiting, the Honourable Guy Pelly. Their Royal Highnesses consumed a number of alco-pop beverages in the car park and joined in the singing of the national anthem *Four-and-Twenty Virgins Came Down From Inverness.*

BRIEF PARAS

TO COMMEMORATE the 30th Anniversary of Bloody Sunday, members of the Parachute Regiment have shot a number of civilians in Afghanistan, claiming that they were fired on first. A full enquiry will be set up in 30 years' time, costing over a million billion pounds.

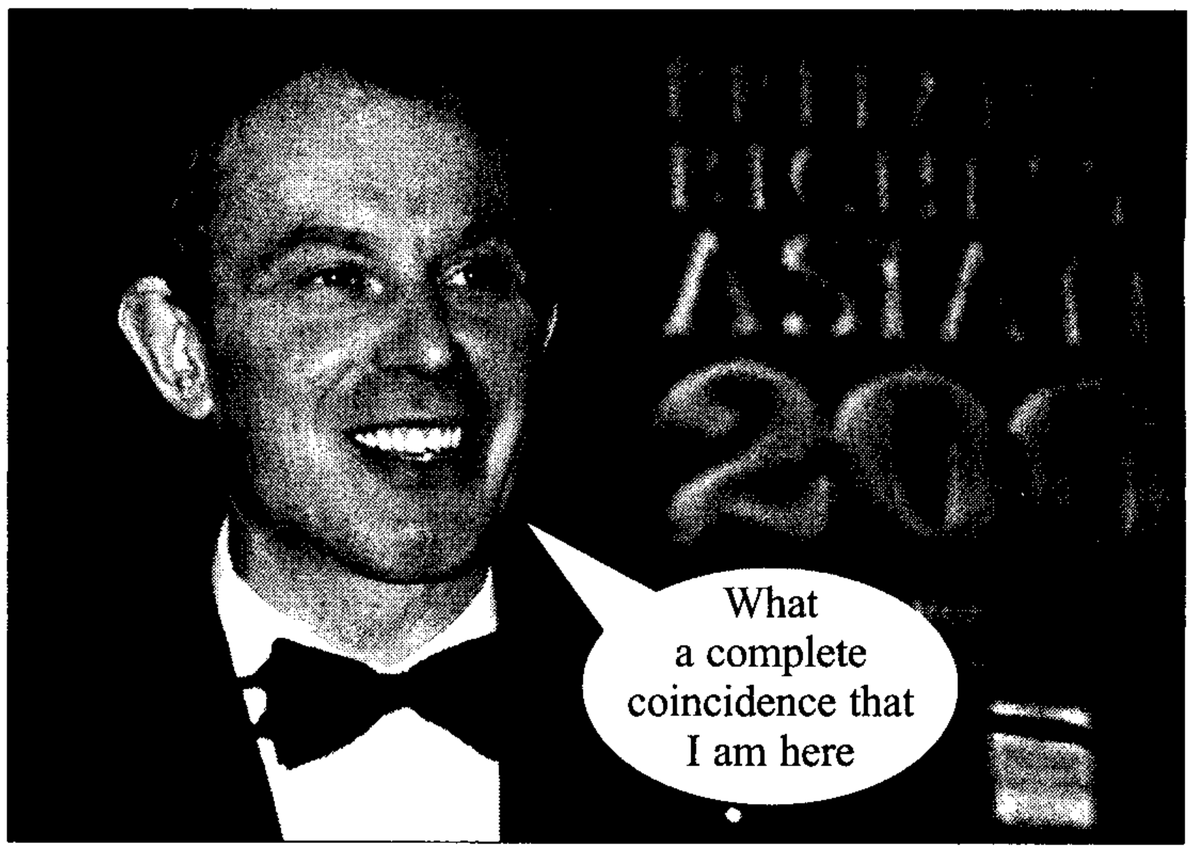
WORLD OF SCIENCE

Amazing breakthrough

SCIENTISTS claimed yesterday that they may have discovered the secret of perpetual motion, whereby a man produces a non-stop flow of poems about the Royal family with no power at all.

(Reuters)

Just Fancy That!



IN THE COURTS

The Case of Her Royal Highness the Naomi of Campbell v. The Daily Moron

Day 94

Before Mr Justice Cocklecarrot

The case continued today in which the world's most beautiful supermodel claimed that her privacy had been breached by a front-page report in the Daily Moron headlined 'Come Off It, Naomi – You're Just A Druggie Slag'.

For the Daily Moron, Mr Desmond Brownnose QC asked the editor of the Daily Moron, Mr Piers Moron, how he could justify the publication of the article.

Mr Brownnose QC: Mr Moron, you are a distinguished and highly-respected journalist, are you not?

Moron: No, I am not.

Brownnose: We agreed you would say "yes" at this point.

Moron: Oh yes, sorry Des.

Mr Justice Cocklecarrot: Miss Campbell, if you would find it easier to follow the proceedings if you were sitting up here next to me, do feel free so to do. Pray continue, Sir Desmond.

Brownnose: I am indebted to Your Lordship.

Cocklecarrot: But not as indebted as you are to the Daily Moron for inviting you to represent them in this absurd case.

(Lawyers all dissolve in laughter at this example of judicial wit)

Brownnose: Very amusing, Your Lordship! Mr Moron, I put it to you that, in publishing this article, you were acting only out of the very highest motives, and out of a desire to serve the public interest in exposing a matter of supreme national importance?

Moron: If you say so, Des!

(The Court then heard the evidence of Miss Chocolate-Soldier)

Mr Andrew Hugefee QC *(for Ms Campbell)*: Miss Campbell, I know that this must be very difficult for you to put into words, but would you describe your feelings at seeing your photograph in the newspaper as being ones of intense agony, humiliation, shame and suicidal depression?

Ms Campbell: Yes, I am a drug addict.

Hugefee: That is the answer to the next question.

Campbell: Oh, shit.

Cocklecarrot: I can well understand, my dear, your feelings of frustration and confusion with all these beastly lawyers asking their horrid questions. Perhaps if you'd like to join me at the Garrick for luncheon, the court could adjourn. They do an awfully good Spotted Dick!

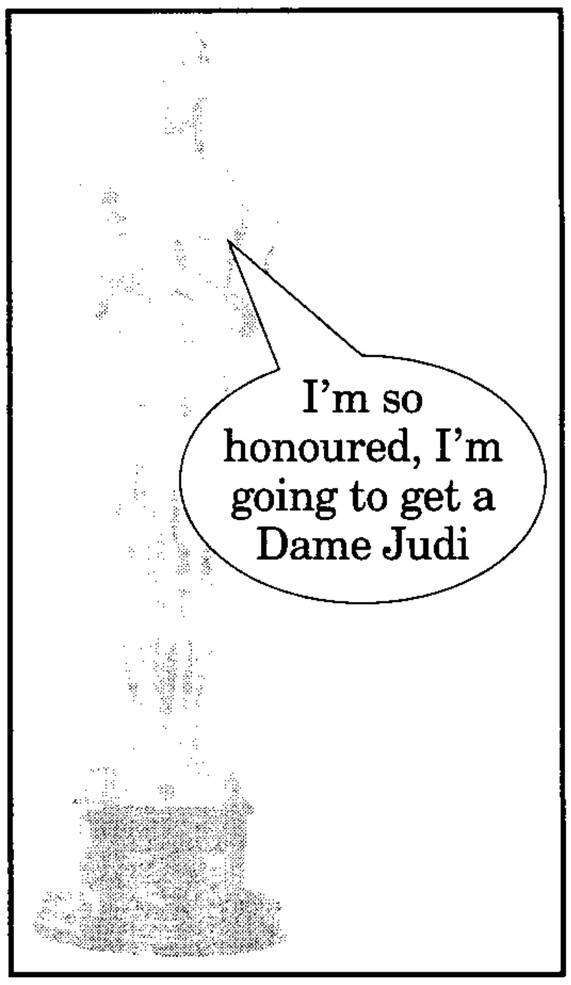
(The court then adjourned until half-past-three, when the cross-examination resumed of Ms Naomi Cokehead)

Mr Brownnose: Miss Cokesniffer, you are well-known, are you not, for your short temper and foul language?

Ms Campbell: Shut up, bumface.

Cocklecarrot: Mr Bumface, I can see you have unnecessarily distressed this delightful young lady. Miss Campbell, it seems to be getting rather hot in this courtroom. Should you feel more comfortable by removing your clothing, please do not let anyone stop you.

(The case continues)



FILM 2002

OSCAR NOMINATION SPECIAL

■ Ministers Inc

Charmless animation from the creators of *Tory Story* and *A Bung's Life*. Tots will be bored witless by the tedious antics of this bunch of two-dimensional characters with their monstrous blue-rinsed hair, chasing after "young voters" and scaring them all off.

■ IDS

Dame Judi Dench is brilliantly cast as the increasingly pathetic and demented figure of Iain Duncan Smith – tragically neglected by the entire Murdoch newspaper family due to his senile views and confused speech. Nominated for Best Unsupporting Party and Worst Performance In A Leading Role.

■ Shred

Fairy stories get a modern-day reworking in this animated denial of cover-ups at the hideous giant Enron Corporation. Kenneth ("Four Shreddings & A Funeral") Lay provides the voice of a comic donkey by talking through his ass. Now showing in Discredited Non-Executive Director's cut (of about $50,000). Nominated for Best Auditing.

■ Fat Hack Down

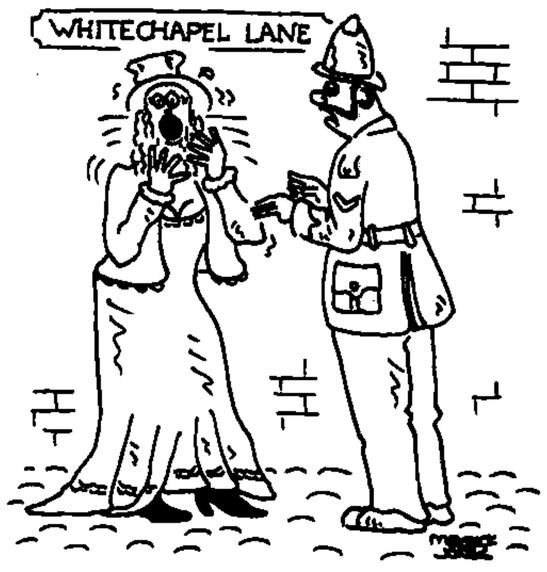
John ("Bravo BBC2-Zero") Simpson steals the show as the Gulf War hero who single-handedly liberates Afghanistan from his hotel room *(Surely "the Taliban"?)* before being shot down in flames by "friendly filing" from fellow reporters. Simpson's burqa scene is reminiscent of Dustin Hoffman's *Tootsie*, and should scoop him this year's Best Actress Award.

■ Ali Fayed

Will Smith piles on the pounds to play phoney Pharaoh Mohamed Al Fayed, still regarded as one of the greatest heavyweights in history despite his increasingly feeble Punch. Plenty of high-octane boxing action as he fights his way into a locked safety deposit box.

(That's enough films. Ed.)

Jack The Ripper 2002



*"Calm yourself, madam. Johnny Depp's accent isn't **that** bad"*

Did The British-Based Pilot Teach The September 11th Terrorists To Fly?

THAT FBI CASE AGAINST LOTFI RAISSI IN FULL

- **What sort of a funny name is that?**
- **What's a bloke like him doing with a pilot's licence?**
- **Er... That's it.**

The Lady with the Lava Lamp

DISASTER APPEAL

The Labour Party is facing economic disaster and desperately needs your help to survive. Your donation *can* make all the difference. Every penny you give counts and we promise it will be directed towards a worthwhile cause. Just think:

£35k buys a switch of energy policy on gas-fired power plants

£125k buys a Romanian steel works

£1 million buys a repeal of the Tobacco Advertising ban

£1 million buys a passport

Little Tony at home in Africa

Give generously now and you will have the satisfaction of providing little Tony *(see pic)* with a roof over his head (in Downing Street) for at least five years.

Please send your cheques at once to Disaster Appeal, Walworth Road, London.

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Barry Foster, TV's Van Der Valk

So. Farewell then
Barry Foster.

You were known to
Millions as
Dutch detective
Inspector Van Der Valk.

Da-da-da-da
Dadada
Da-da-da-da-da-da.

That was your
Theme tune.

Keith points out
That you were the second
Famous TV detective
To die
Within a month.

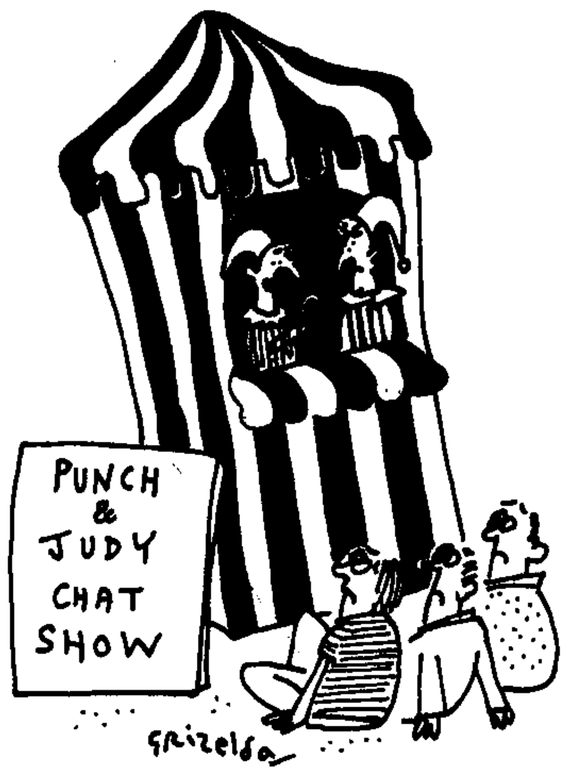
The other being
Stratford Johns
Or Inspector Barlow
Of Z-Cars fame.

For those who missed
My last poem
His theme tune was
Da-da-da
De-dum-dum-dum-dum etc.

Who will be the next
To go?

It is a job for a
Detective.

P.C. Thribb (49½)



"...so, tell me Punch... what's the way to do it?"

OLD RHYMES

**By hook or by crook,
A right Charlie I'll look**
(Trad)

Warhol
TATE MODERN
THIS IS NOT A REAL TICKET! THIS IS A CHEAP SILKSCREEN COPY!
TATE £10
Campbell's CONDENSED
BLACK BEAN SOUP
BUGGER! I'VE GOT PAINT ALL DOWN MY TIE!
A CHILD OF FIVE WITH A GOOD AGENT COULD HAVE DONE IT!
URINATION OXIDATION PICTURES 1978
CANNED LAUGHTER
SOUP
HA! HA! HA! HE! HE!
EAK!
TATE MOD CAFE
SOUP'S OFF!

HAS TONY BLAIR GONE BLIND?

The Tell-Tale Picture

(SURELY 'BLOND'? ED)

by Our BBC Staff **Sir Christopher Blond**

IT's the question they're all asking at Westminster. Can the Prime Minister really have decided to go blind?

His recent appearance on a BBC news programme provided conclusive proof that he can no longer see anything that is going on in Britain.

When answering questions about crime, health, education, transport and sleaze, the Prime Minister seemed completely unable to focus.

Bad Blair Day

"I can't see anything wrong myself," he told an interviewer. "Everything looks fine to me."

GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES EDUCATION SHAKE-UP

THE Education Minister Estelle Morris has unveiled a new scheme that will mean that schoolchildren will be able to by-pass their GCSEs.

"The system is known as truancy", said the clearly delighted minister, "and has been proved to ease over-crowding in the classroom whilst at the same time increasing the overall pass rate.

"We firmly believe that letting simple-minded infant thugs terrorise shopping centres during the day is the way forward for the British education system."

Late Education News

ESTELLE Morris has also confirmed that in a radical shake-up of our education system all British school children under 10 will be made to learn "a language" totally foreign to them.

"Yes, we're going to make them learn English," said a delighted *(Cont'd. p. 94)*

(Reuters)

SPEAKER LASHES COMMONS 'SNOBS'

by Our Political Staff **Andrew Marrtin**

THE SPEAKER of the House of Commons, Mr Michael Martin, today hit out at his critics whom, he said, "Look down their noses at the likes of me."

Mr Martin complained that he was the victim of discrimination and was being pilloried simply because he was "useless".

Working Arse

He told reporters, "Just because I am not up to the job, that is no reason to criticise me. People who are useless have as much right to be Speaker as those who aren't.

"It's all down to the way I speak," he continued. "The snobs have got it in for me because when I open my mouth I talk nonsense. I can't help that. It's the way I am.

"It's all down to class," he concluded. "I haven't got any – unlike Betty Boothroyd, George Thomas and all those other snooty toffs who had the job before *(continued p. 94)*

"Ordure! Ordure!

A Taxi Driver Writes

Every week a well-known cab driver is invited to comment on an issue of national importance.

THIS WEEK: **Sid Nozzer** (Cab no. 7062) on the hugely increased bill to the taxpayer incurred by the office of the Lord Chancellor, Lord Irving of Lairg, for the taking of taxis to various undisclosed addresses in the metropolis.

...it's a bloody scandal, guv, the way this government carries on, ripping off the public, just so they can swan about London in cabs at the expense of the poor old taxpayers. Mind you, come to think about it, it's only fair. They've got a difficult job, haven't they, running the country and that. I say good luck to them. I 'ad that Lord Irvine in the back of the cab once. I think he'd had a few. He didn't notice when I charged him £50 to get from Westminster to the Garrick. Nice old gentleman...

If you are visiting any of the 12 countries listed below (set out in a memorable way), BAA airport bureaux de change in the Arrivals area offer an ideal way to use up all the currency you have left over – you won't be able to save it for your next trip...

B A F F L I N G

P I G S

Rough Guide to Stansted Airport (BAA Airports)

the PREMIERSH*TS

PAUL WOOD

WELL WE'RE BOTH FROM THE STREETS LIKE...
INNER CITY FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT
...SO WE KNOW HOW HARD IT IS FOR THE KIDS OF TODAY...
THAT'S WHY WE LIKE HELPING OUT WITH THESE TOURNAMENTS, IT'S GREAT FOR THE YOUNGSTERS TO SEE FOOTBALL AS A WAY OF GETTING A JOB AND MAKING SOME MONEY..
ARE YOU THE GUY OFFERING £500 FOR SOME CHARLIE?
YEH, NOW SCARPER KID!
T.V. OUTSIDE BROADCAST
£50

Verses To Mark The Heroic Outlawing Of Hunting With Hounds North Of The Border

BY WILLIAM REES-MCGONAGALL

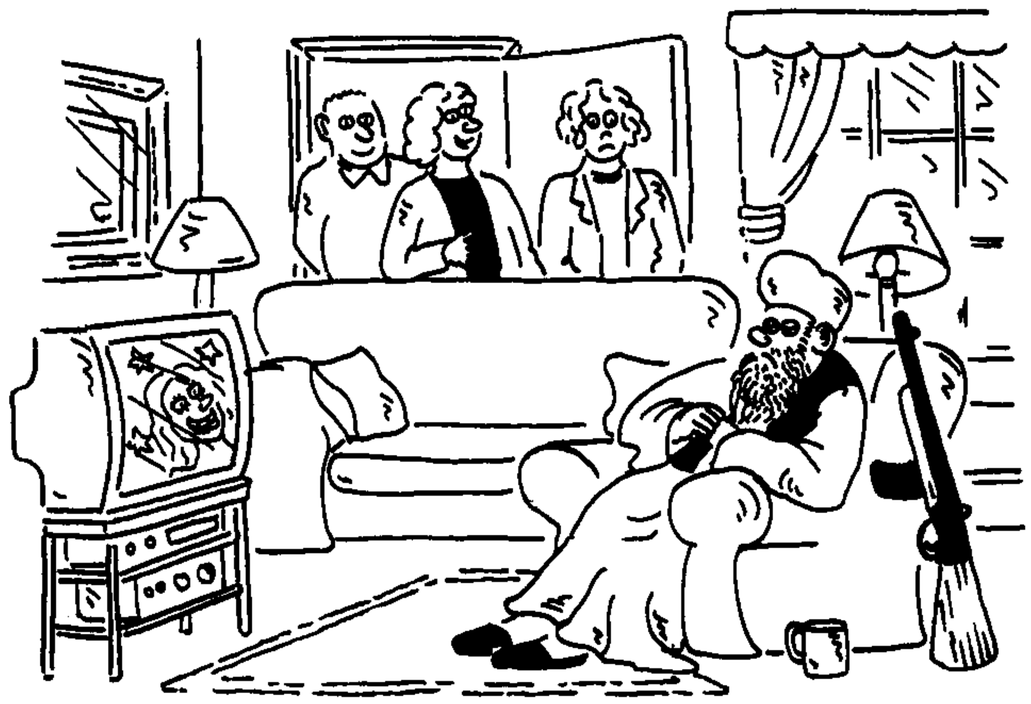
'Twas in the year two-thousand-and-two
That the Scottish Parliament at last showed what
it could do!
When the heirs of those great reformers Calvin
and Knox
Finally managed to ban the hunting of the fox.

For centuries past, Scotland had borne no greater shame
Than the ruthless pursuit of bushy-tailed game,
As the sassenach lairds with their baying hounds
Had chased the fox o'er all Scotland's holy grounds.

Never was known such a cruel and barbarous sport
As when puir wee Reynard by the English dogs
was caught.
Never in history had so much innocent blood stained
the heather
Nor were the huntsmen constrained by the vagaries
of the weather.

But then at last the bravehearts of the Scottish
Assembly
Showed all the courage of Scotland's football fans
when they travel down to Wembley
And with a mighty cry of "Ye'll no gang hunting
nae more"
On this terrible infringement of animal rights they
slammed the door.

Meanwhile 400 miles away in London town
No wonder prime minister Blair was wearing a
fearful frown.
For the gallant MSPs had shown him the way
And he said "I'll do the same myself - some other day."



"Andrew's at a bit of a loose end. He'd planned to spend his gap year fighting for the Taliban"

30 Years of Cosmo

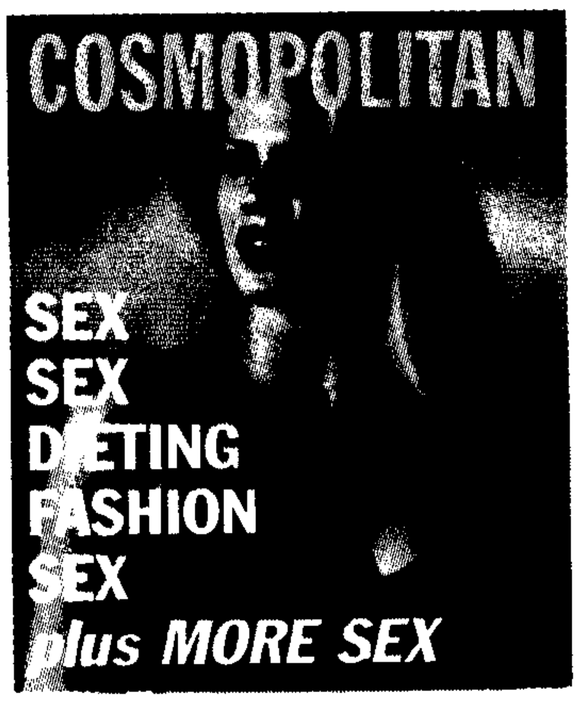
by **Phillipa Page**

IT SEEMS only yesterday that I bought my first copy of Cosmopolitan as I stood in the newsagent in my mini-skirt. Now, four decades later I am still an avid reader of this brilliant magazine as I sit here in my mini-skirt looking 30 years older.

How the magazine has changed over the centuries

TO LOOK back at those early issues is to visit a vanished world, a world in which young women were obsessed with sex, dieting and fashion. Today all that has changed. The new woman of 2002 has very different interests and is mainly obsessed with fashion, dieting and sex.

Feb 1972



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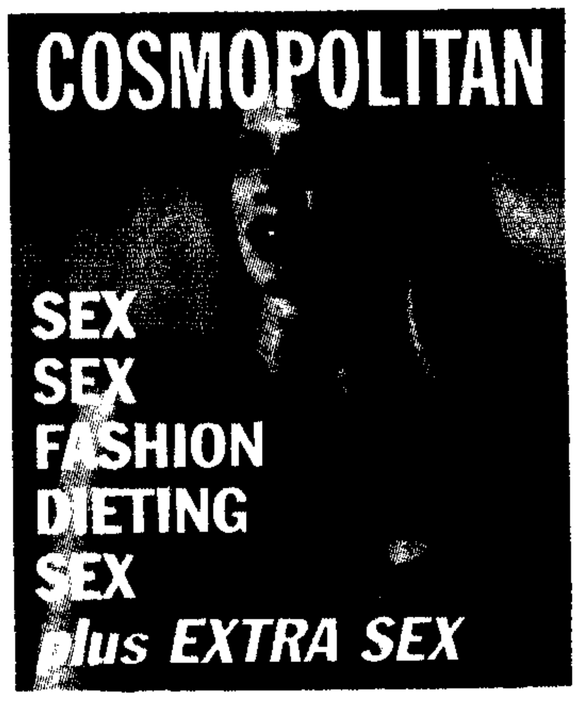


SPECIAL ONE-AND-A-HALF-PAGE NON-PULLOUT MEMORIAL SUPPLEMENT

PRINCESS MARGARET

A NATION DOESN'T MOURN

by Our Entire Staff Phil Supplement

AS A mark of respect, the entire nation carried on as normal yesterday, after the death was announced of Her Royal Highness Princess Margaret.

"It is just like Diana all over again," said no one, as two small bouquets of flowers were laid at the palace railings by newspaper photographers desperate for some kind of a picture to mark the occasion.

Flags flew at half-mast, cathedral bells sounded muffled peals and millions of ordinary people failed to observe a minute's silence as they queued to get into their local supermarket.

The Poet Laureate Marks The Passing Of Her Royal Highness With A Moving Verse Tribute

Death Of A Princess

by SIR ANDREW GOINGTHROUGHTHEMOTION

So. Farewell then
Princess Margaret.
Torn between love and
Duty.
A life unfulfilled.
The rebellious conformist.
Trapped bird in
A royal cage.
Poor little
Rich girl.
Will this
Do? *(A.M.)*

Was She The World's Most Talented Woman?

asks Paul Johnson

PRINCESS Margaret had the misfortune to be born a princess. It was a truly tragic fate which denied her the chance to excel in almost any walk of life she might have chosen.

Those of us who had the privilege of knowing her were constantly in awe at the extraordinary range of her talents and learning.

She could easily, for instance, have been an Oxford don, and had read almost every book printed in the English language.

The Bible she knew by heart, and had it not been for her sex, she would have been a strong candidate to become the first female Archbishop of Canterbury.

Her wit was legendary, and she was often compared to Oscar Wilde, Dorothy Parker and TV's Alan Coren.

"Who's that common little man with a cigar?" she once asked, pointing at Sir Winston Churchill.

Anyone who heard her play *Chopsticks* would have known at once that she had formidable gifts as a pianist which, had fate decreed otherwise, could have put her up alongside Artur Rubinstein or Vladimir Horovitz.

And that is to ignore her wonderful singing. She knew all the songs from the shows, and could be prevailed upon at a soiree to sing "Wouldn't it be luvverly" in an amusing cockney voice.

She was furthermore probably the greatest 20th Century expert on classical ballet, and her gift for smoking was *(cont'd. p. 94)*

Terrible Old Farce Closes

by Our Theatrical Staff **Sheridan Borley**

"CHARLEY'S AUNT", one of the West End's longest-running comedy shows, came unexpectedly to an end last night at the Kensington Palace.

Said a spokesman, "It is very sad, but it was inevitable.

"In the Fifties, audiences queued round the block for what was hailed as the wittiest and most glamorous show in town.

"But recently we couldn't give the tickets away. The punters are no longer interested in this drawing room stuff.

"They want something a bit more raunchy, like *The Merry Wives of Charles Windsor*."

20 Players

Over the years, a succession of glamorous leading men have played opposite the show's legendary star, Charley's Aunt.

They include:

☐ Pete Townshend, war hero and pop singer, who was removed from the play after complaints by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

☐ Photographer and part-time furniture maker Tony Armchair-Jones, who walked out because he couldn't stand playing second fiddle to the star.

☐ Alec Douglas-Home, part-time prime minister and nightclub pianist, who was tragically dropped from the show in the Sixties.

☐ Sir Roderick Llewellyn, part-time gardener and Olympic show-jumper, who revitalised the show in the Seventies by taking his clothes off.

Tragedy

But even to the end, the show still had its devoted followers, number one among them being Lord St John Stevarse of Fawnsley, who attended every single performance.

"It is the most tragic day in the history of this country," he sobbed. "The show had magic, style, wit, talent and an indefinable mystique that you just don't find any more in these common and vulgar new shows, like *Princess Annie Get Your Divorce* and *No Wessex Please, We're British.*

A.N. Wislon writes on The Great 'Ifs' Of History

How would the world have been different if

- **Hitler had won World War II?**
- **Dinosaurs were still roaming the earth?**
- **Princess Margaret had been allowed to marry Group Captain Townsend?**

A.N. Wislon, only in the Evening Standard and everywhere else

LATE NEWS

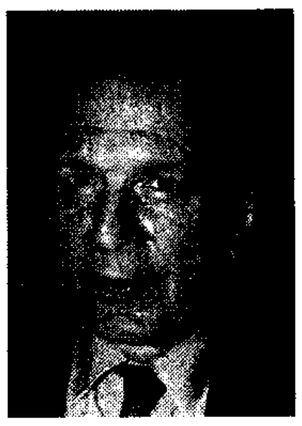
Queen Mother Will Attend Own Funeral

THERE WAS shock news from Buckingham Palace last night, when it was confirmed that the Queen Mother would be attending her own funeral.

(Reuters)

MY DINNER WITH MARGARET
THE COUNTRY'S TOP COLUMNISTS REMEMBER

NIGEL DEMPSTER



THOUGH I could never put it into print at the time, I was – I now realise – Princess Margaret's closest male friend. It is correct in the strictly legal sense to say that we were never married – but ours was without doubt the deepest relationship of her life.

I know for certain she would read my column over breakfast in bed. "I can't start the day without William Hickey!" she confided in a mutual friend. This was our code word for Nigel Dempster. She was always a terrific tease – and an irrepressible flirt.

Meeting me was something for her to treasure for the rest of her life. On an official tour of the Daily Mail offices in October, '73, she was guided inexorably towards me – 35th in a line-up of just 43.

"And this," intoned Lord Rothermere, "is our diarist, Nigel Dempster."

Electricity crackled through the air. Our eyes locked – and within second our hands were clasped tight together, one against the other, in urgent passionate almost convulsive shakes – up, down, up, down, UP, DOWN – but somehow our hearts kept beating.

"And what –" she purred breathlessly through those haughty, pouting Royal lips, her eyes sinking ever deeper into mine, "and what... do YOU do?"

In the intense emotional drama of the moment – swept away in a swirl of romance – I have lost all memory of the exact words I used in reply. Sometimes language transcends mere words. But we both knew what I meant.

"Keep you... BUSY – do they?" she continued, her breasts heaving tremulously beneath her navy blue coat, its bright gold buttons catching my reflection in triplicate.

But before I could reply, she was led away by my proprietor to a deluxe luncheon – smoked salmon, chicken vol-au-vents, chocolate roulade, choice of fine wines – in the Executive Dining Suite.

We were never to meet again, but as my eyes trailed after her, I knew from the way her legs moved back and forth that her thoughts would always remain of me – and of me alone.

PETER STOTHARD

MAYBE it was because I was Editor of the Times, no less, that she expected me to know which one she was. If so, she had another thought coming. I had her down as Princess Alexandria, the one who married that Mark Phillips bloke. Whoops! What a right Royal clanger! Anyway, throughout our meeting, she made it pretty clear that she was the Royal, and I was very much the commoner. The fact that I also just happened to be Editor of The Times failed to raise me to Royal status in her eyes. She made that abundantly clear by the snooty way she said, "How do you do?" and then waited testily for an answer. I forget my reply now – possibly something about being very well thank you – but by the time I had finished she had passed on down the line. So much for Royal grace decorum, thinks I!

GORE VIDAL

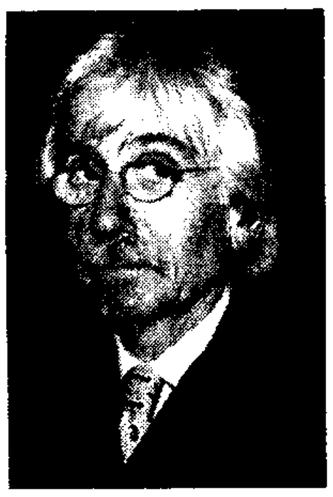
WE MET as equals. I, too, am a member of the British Royal Family, through my great, great uncle Bore Vidal, who was, I believe, married, on and off, to the late Queen Mary. This, I understand, means that I, too, could have become Queen, but I elected not to, finding the prospect frankly tedious, and graciously allowed the title to revert to poor dear cousin Lilibet.

And so to poor wee Princess Margaret, late of that parish. She was, of course, the most brilliant mimic. Prior to our first meeting, I had been alerted to this notable talent by mutual friends. I arrived prepared to be amused. Margaret's comic timing was, it behoves me to say, impeccable. As we paraded into luncheon together, I said, "I hear you are the most marvellous mimic." Margaret opened her mouth, and, reeling around, delivered a series of high-pitched squawks. I dutifully roared with laughter.

"The best drunken cockatoo I have heard in all my born days!" I exclaimed.

"But I haven't started yet," she complained.

SIR ROY STRONG



SHE MAY have been the teensiest bit COMMON, bless her, but my goodness she had RAZZLE DAZZLE. In so many ways, Margaret personified the sheer devil-may-care spirit of the Sixties. I shall never forget a spectacular luncheon party she threw on the Isle of Mustique in August, 1969. Everyone who was anyone in the Sixties was there. Tripping around the exquisitely-mown lawn on my allotted golf-buggy before the serving of the Piña Coladas, I remember overtaking Gerry and the Pacemakers, all crammed into one little buggy, and Sir Gerald Nabarro, Frank Ifield and Freddy "Parrot-Face" Davis having a whale of a time in another.

Luncheon was a delightful affair. One now forgets what the Princess was wearing, but I myself was wearing a crushed-velvet suit in the most beautiful deep purple, with a Burlington Bertie smock to match. Prompted by sheer JOIE DE VIVRE into perfectly SHAMEFUL indiscretions, I hugely amused the Princess with my running commentary on all the latest goings-on among the senior heads of department in the British Museum. The Princess sat fixed to her seat, her head cocked to one side, her eyes tight-shut, so as to soak it all in. It is greatly to her credit that she would surround herself with people far more intelligent than herself.

After a sumptuous luncheon, a vast cake was wheeled out by the most magnificent pair of coloured gentlemen. And then – PURE THEATRE! – Kathy Kirby and Norman Wisdom leapt out and proceeded to polka the afternoon away to the music of Burl Ives. MAGIC!

Margaret – who I will always remember as one of the most intensely musical figures of that era – clapped quite brilliantly in time, getting almost every single clap exactly right.

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

SO, DEBS, ANY NEWS ON THE GETTING PREGNANT FRONT?
WELL. GUESS WHAT?
GARY AND I POPPED DOWN TO THE CHEMIST YESTERDAY AND BOUGHT A PREGNANCY TESTING KIT...
AND I'M THRILLED TO SAY THE RESULTS WERE POSITIVE...
REALLY POSITNE. WE MIGHT EVEN TRY FOR A BABY NOW.
DEBS BLOKE PREGGERS AGAIN?
WHY NOT? THERE'S OBVIOUSLY MASSES OF PUBLIC INTEREST.

Literary Review

Kitchen range

Girl from the South
Joanna Trollope
(Bloomsbury, £16.99)

TRADITIONALLY, novels about adultery set in Hampstead (aka Drabble Babbles) have been deemed "literary", while those set in the country have been dubbed Aga Sagas. This may be unfair but it makes things easier for the marketing department.

Joanna Trollope, whose "contemporary" fictions (she also writes historical romance under the name Caroline Harvey) may be considered the best examples of the latter, apparently hates the term Aga Saga. "It conjures up an image of such a confined little world," she said in one interview, "it makes me scream whenever I hear it." Methinks this lady novelist doth protest too much.

After all, there it stands, that eponymous kitchen range, on page 15 of her 1992 novel *The Men And The Girls*, heating up a *boeuf bourguignon* in an "olive-green glazed pot from Provence". Very tasteful. (Tasty too, I dare say. Even reheated.)

Of course, not all her characters' kitchens feature an Aga. At the end of *A Village Affair* (1989) the banished adultress whose lesbian romp has gone off the boil ends up consoling herself by a rather inferior Rayburn. Oh dear.

But the idea of the Aga is always there. It stands not just for the cosy country kitchens of rural life but also the limited range, as it were, of emotional temperatures on offer. "Miss Dunstable decided to say nothing about the Rector's imperfectly ironed surplice" goes a typical sentence in *The Rector's Wife* (1991). Ah, the gossip of village life! Positively soaperatic. Of course, most soap operas only concern the lower classes, so it's quite nice to have something equally familiar for the middle class reader to enjoy.

What Joanna Trollope offers such readers is a literary equivalent of the sort of comfort food Delia Smith has made her own. The recipes are simple, reliable and positively scrumptious. And just like Delia she gives them the daring twist of an untraditional ingredient. A dash of lesbianism, say, like chilli in the cottage pie; or the bittersweet taste of a less than happy ending. Thus in *A Spanish Lover* (1993), the Brookner heroine of an E.M. Forster plot set in Seville ends up eating what might be called Humble Paella. Or should that be Delia's bread and butter pudding with bitter Seville marmalade topping?

The latest Trollope recipe is an even more daring, or desperate, attempt to escape the confines of the cast iron kitchen range casserole. The book alternates between

the southern fried world of Charleston, South Carolina, and a London world of shared flats with electric hobs. Gone are the frustrated housewives, errant husbands and tiresome children of the earlier books. Instead, rather as though Delia were suddenly to be found cooking up a storm with Jamie Oliver's mates, she concerns herself entirely with the doings and frayings of a bunch of twentysomethings.

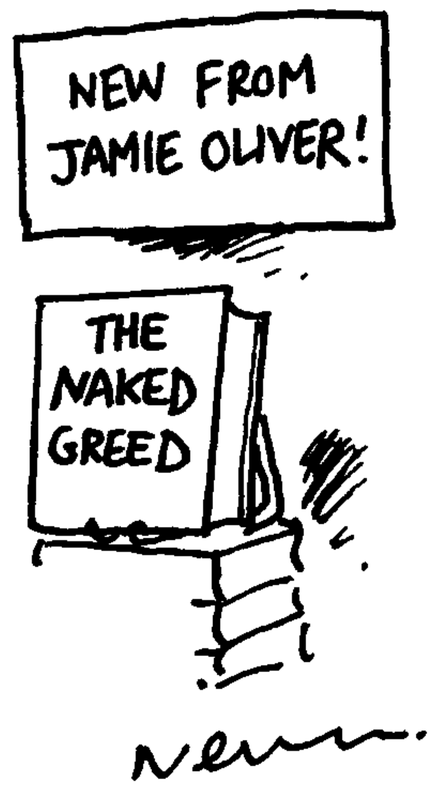
Gillon, the girl of the title, escapes the ties of Duty and Family in the traditional South to savour the cosmopolitan charms of free and easy London. She gets an arty job and meets Tilly, a magazine editor, and falls in love with (sorry, did I spoil it for you?) Robert, Tilly's longstanding photographer boyfriend who, of course, won't commit. Like his friend William, he finds it hard to live up to the romantic ideal of the marriageable male. Poor chap. And girls these days are so demanding. They want it all, don't they?

William's girlfriend Susie is a bit of a slut who runs away to Spain. She gets to eat humble paella too, but it doesn't work because by then William has slept with Tilly, who gives him seven out of ten and laughs for the first time in months. Susie moves out and someone cleans the cooker at last. (Eh? Oh, a Belling I expect.)

When Robert follows Gillon back to America, he gets to meet all her fine and dandy old Southern family, and embraces their lovingly researched world of country clubs, coloured maids and marble floored piazzas. My, you can almost taste that recipe for Jalapeno-Cheese Grits that Grandma Sarah Cutworth clips from *Southern Living Magazine*! (And just in case anyone doesn't recognise their home town, there is a "Note for Charlestonians" in the front of the book explaining what house is meant to go where. Perhaps that should read "Not for Charlestonians.")

So the country cook of Glawstsher has a go at Chick Lit on toast with Singleton Sauce. She doesn't quite pull it off. The characters she depicts having their mid-youth crises seem mere join-the-dots embodiments of Trollope's ideas about the futility of their lives. Robert and William are a pair of clumsy wet labradors who say nothing much but "sorry" all the time. Gillon has funny hair and won't commit either, while Tilly just mopes about the place wanting something different. They all use dialogue to interpret their predicament ("My mother says loyalty is a gift but commitment is a demand") but leave their feelings to be explained by the author. No one has much in the way of sex.

So what else is new? Compare this sentence from the new book, "It's only change, Mother... It happens all the time. It isn't the end" with this one from *The Men And The Girls*: "'Things change,' James said, 'It's part of the healing process.'" Not too much change in the Trollope world, then. The same fare... but réchauffé.



Books & Bookmen

■ IF THE publicity department at Orion needs grovelling quotes to grace the paperback edition of Nicholas Coleridge's latest novel, *Godchildren*, they need look no further than the Condé Nast stable of magazines.

"Delightfully devious plot. His most unputdownable novel yet," raves the books page of *GQ*. "A compelling saga of British society, relationships and power," recommends *Vogue*. By coincidence the managing director of Condé Nast is none other than... Nicholas Coleridge!

■ GIVING birth live on the internet as a pay-per-view attraction is not the only creative project currently on offer from "glamour" model Jordan. Managers of the silicon saddo have been trying to interest the world in her memoirs for the last year or so.

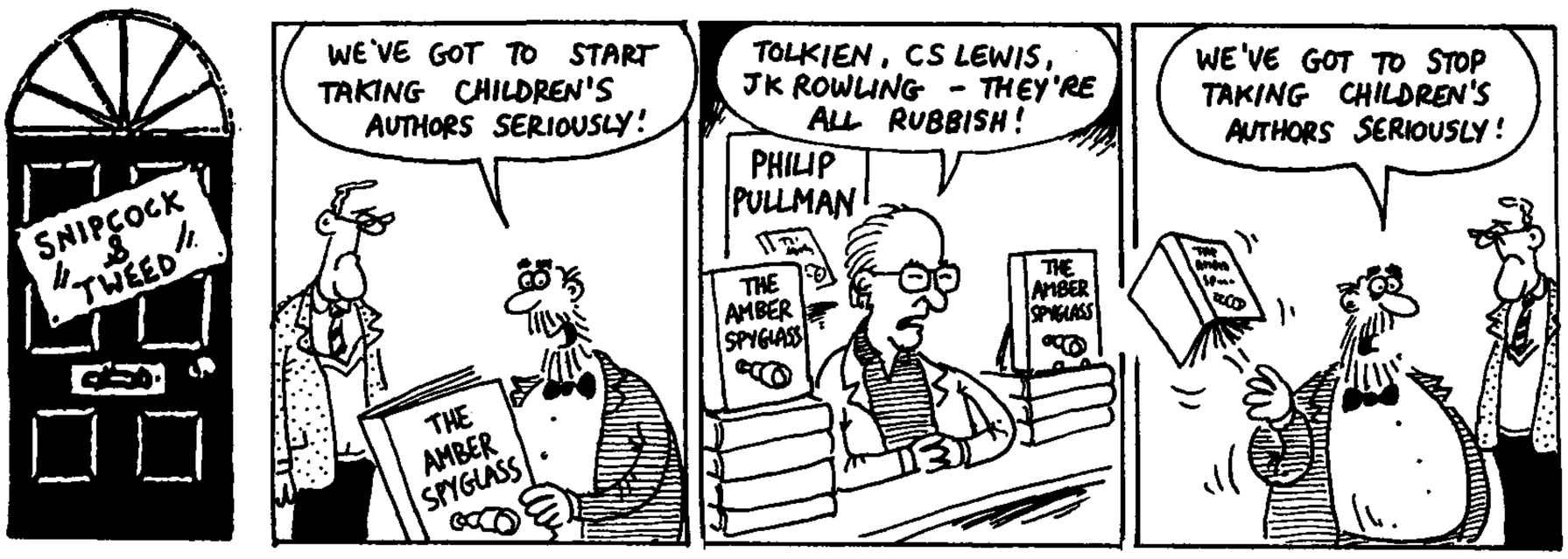
Unfortunately, over this period she has been going through literary agents like she goes through premier league footballers (Dwight Yorke being the sire of the unborn) and C-list pop stars. Already Robert Smith and Andrew Lownie, among others, have spent brief periods representing her, before throwing their hands up in dismay. The grasping manner of her Svengali-like managers and their inability to grasp that the book world functions differently to Page 3 are not thought to have helped matters.

Now they are putting out discreet feelers among agents who haven't yet had their fingers burned. The main question is why are they bothering to offer it around? The only publisher likely to be interested is that mullet-wearing champion of lowlife and freaks, John "Flakey" Blake.

■ THE exodus has resumed at Penguin with the departure of mind, body and spirit publisher Eileen Campbell less than 18 months after she joined the company from HarpicCollins' Thorsons imprint.

In his statement announcing her departure, Penguin general md Tom Weldon, the man who lured her from Thorsons, took out just half an onion. "Eileen is a lovely person," he said. "You have to try new initiatives. Sometimes they work, sometimes they don't."

In fact the venture was actually


SNIPCOCK & TWEED
WE'VE GOT TO START TAKING CHILDREN'S AUTHORS SERIOUSLY!
THE AMBER SPYGLASS
TOLKIEN, CS LEWIS, JK ROWLING - THEY'RE ALL RUBBISH!
PHILIP PULLMAN
THE AMBER SPYGLASS
THE AMBER SPYGLASS
WE'VE GOT TO STOP TAKING CHILDREN'S AUTHORS SERIOUSLY!

working. While not selling as many copies as Posh Spice's autobiography (signed by Weldon for silly money), Campbell's books were shifting in quantities at which most mind-body-spirit publishers would not turn up their noses. Weldon went on to say: "If something's not working, you have to take a decision on it, and it's better to do that sooner rather than later." Having been forced out after such a short time, very few of the projects Campbell had been nurturing had yet come to fruition, so how could he really tell?

■ WHO was the famous businessman who set out his philosophy on the dust cover of a 1998 book by management gurus Bruce Pasternak and Albert Viscio entitled *The Centreless Corporation*?

As he wrote: "The command and control model has been widely, and wisely, rejected in the running of economies and deserves the same fate in the running of corporations... Pasternak and Viscio explain convincingly why a centerless model is right for the 21st century company."

Step forward Kenneth Lay, the fifth amendment mute at the centre of the Enron debacle, speaking at a time when he was far less guarded.

Good to see the former Enron chairman applying his theories of centrelessness to his own plight – ie there is no centre to the Enron scandal, and even if there were it would not be him. The book itself has not been immune to Lay's Enron principles: when discovered in the Midlands it had been reduced from £17.99 to 99p.

■ A SUMMONS to Waterstone's HQ at Brentford went out last week to the mds and sales directors of our leading publishers, inviting them to meet Steve Knott, David "Mekon" Kneale's replacement.

Many expected to hear something else of import and for a while the industry was abuzz. Had Tim "Dan Dare" Waterstone launched another bid for the family firm? Was the much-vaunted flotation underway? Was the company being run by a religious cult? In fact it really was just a shake-hands with Knott, who is understood to be a vast improvement over his predecessor.

'Bookworm'

JUST FANCY THAT!

"Ironically [the Prime Minister], who began his political career as an ardent social reformer, found himself increasingly captivated by foreign policy...[He] was determined to make the new diplomacy work and thought he could do so by attending conferences [and]... was convinced that his personal dynamism and leadership should be employed in the creation of a new international order. His activities, unfortunately, aroused the resentment and hostility of the Foreign Office. [The PM] was going to make his own foreign policy, and the Foreign Office would have to play catch up."

— From Doer, P. W., on Lloyd George in British Foreign Policy 1919-1939 *(Manchester, 1998), pp 55-56.*

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

■ CONCERTGOERS arriving at the Wigmore Hall the other week to see the Hanover Band, one of Britain's best-known Early Music groups, were surprised to be told the event had been cancelled because the Band had ceased to exist.

After struggling with debts of around £150,000, the Band's managers apparently threw in the towel when the bank called in the overdraft. Still more surprising was the fact that within days the Band had miraculously come back to life, with fund-raising concerts and a campaign for financial support by the ensemble's home-base newspaper, the *Brighton Argus*.

All of which might seem fortuitous but for a lingering doubt in the music world that the Band – or at least its current management – would be better off consigned to oblivion. The management in question is the husband-and-wife team of Stephen Neiman, MD, and Caroline Brown, artistic director; who have been in their jobs for a long while, building between them a formidable reputation for administrative unreliability and non-payment of fees.

A number of the Band's more illustrious guest artists have resolved not to work with them any more. And when they applied last year to the Arts Council for stabilisation funds that might have rescued them from their predicament, they were resolutely turned down. Perhaps for the sake of all concerned, it would be better if the Hanover Band's Lazarus act involved a change of personnel.

■ AMONG the less likely contenders for European City of Culture in 2008 is Belfast, keen to shrug off its image as the place where street-theatre means throwing stones at the police and emerge, Glasgow-like, into a brave new world of wine bars, jazz cafes and Harvey Nicks.

Alas, Belfast's hopes have been dashed by the Northern Ireland Arts Council's decision not to grant the city the £3m it needs to upgrade the Grand Opera House: one of Belfast's key cultural venues and essential to any European bid. The Opera hasn't actually seen much opera for a long time, but that's partly because it used to be a target for the IRA, and partly because backstage facilities were primitive.

The renovation would have made things easier. But the scheme has been turned down for reasons that can hardly encourage Belfast in its quest for cultural sophistication. Asked to comment on the Grand Opera plans, an Arts Council spokesman dismissed them as "optimistic".

■ AS Britain's greatest living commentator on the arts, it would be reasonable to assume Melvyn Bragg had some familiarity with the names of the arts world's leading figures. Especially when he has to introduce them at his own awards event.

But in the space of half an hour at the *South Bank Show* Awards – subsequently televised – he managed to mispronounce the pianist Mitsuko Uchida; turn the composer Hans Werner Henze into a can of beans by calling him Heinz; and welcome Alfred Brendel on stage beside a piece of electronic signage announcing *Sir* Alfred – something Mr Brendel cannot be unless he chooses to be British. Which he doesn't.

If Lord Bragg wants his awards to be taken seriously he should cancel his subscription to the Classic FM school of music research and find out more about his guests.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

Pseuds Corner

Organised religion developed some of the first truly great global brands. They created powerful, globally recognisable symbols such as the cross, told great brand stories, used the mass media of churches, used brand ambassadors (clerics, missionaries), created a sense of identity by attacking rivals through various holy wars and created a sense of awe and spectacle through grand cathedrals and major festivities.

SEAN BRIERLEY
Marketing Week

One of the few valid "lessons of history" is that agglutinative processes always set off fissile reactions.

FELIPE FERNANDEZ-ARMESTO
Independent

I try to cut out the carbohydrates, though that's a little difficult if I'm served the sweet that New York chef Daniel Boulud created for me, called "La Diva Renee". It's pretty outrageous, full of champagne truffles and cream and topped by a sliver of chocolate on which a page from the score of *Der Rozenkavalier* has been printed.

RENEE FLEMING
'My Kind of Day', *Radio Times*

Gillian Ferguson – literature

This project, to be called The Poetry of Cloning, will explore, through poetry, the scientific, medical, spiritual, social, cultural and ethical implications of cloning, and the wider context of the mapping of the Human Genome. It will seek to respond to the scientific possibilities of this new genetic research and creatively examine the challenges. After a period of research and interviews with front-line scientists, including Dr Severino Antinori, the doctor who wants to clone the first human, Gillian will create a series of 'Light Poems' etched or sandblasted onto glass and finally the book itself.

Scottish Arts Council '2002 Creative Scotland' awards announcement

The Hegelian philosophical principle that out of a thesis and its opposed antithesis comes the hardy alloy of a synthesis has a seductive power.

MICHAEL GOVE
The Times

There were, of course, some serious setbacks. The year 2000 saw Russia draw ahead of Caius in the number of prizes it has won.

NEIL MCKENDRICK, Master of Gonville & Caius College Cambridge, writing in its annual record, *The Caian*

CONTRIBUTORS: Chris Merkel, Simon Ward, Christopher Hart, Lord Gnome, Martin Philip, Charlie Turner.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

MMR:

SCARE-MONGERING?

WHEN, 16 months ago, an "incalculably small risk" was identified in a polio vaccine derived from potentially "mad" British cows, the government withdrew it from the market. At the time chief medical officer Sir Liam Donaldson said: "Public confidence in medicine safety is paramount. We have to approach this from a precautionary principle..."

With public confidence in the MMR triple vaccine now at a critical low and with new research showing there might be a risk, one might have expected similar caution to apply. Even if the government didn't bow to pressure to withdraw the triple jab, it might have been sympathetic to the overwhelming wish of parents to be offered the choice of single vaccines instead. But no. Donaldson, along with ministers and other government health advisers, went on a bullyboy offensive instead, accusing those who express doubt or concern of "scare-mongering" and "playing Russian roulette" with children's lives.

In fact it is the latest research in the MMR-autism controversy – a study that shows the unexplained presence of the measles virus in the guts of vaccinated children who have both serious gut and bowel disease and autism – which has most alarmed parents.

The study comes from Dublin-based Prof John O'Leary and a team including Andrew Wakefield, the gastro-enterologist at the centre of the MMR-autism furore. Again, it does *not* prove a link and the scientists behind the paper are not claiming that it does. But it does raise serious questions.

What is the virus doing in children who have received either the MMR vaccine or another vaccine containing measles? Everyone knows how potentially damaging measles can be, so is it responsible for the rare gut disease from which they all suffer? Could that in turn trigger autism? Or is it a case of children who are prone to develop autism and gut disease have immune systems which render their bodies unable to properly deal with the measles virus, either from the vaccine or the wild?

These questions need serious investigation. But Sir Liam's response was to say the paper is "riddled with flaws". Really? The paper has been fully peer-reviewed and the researchers have offered their raw data for scrutiny.

One criticism has been that the team did not do DNA sequencing to find out if the measles virus came from vaccine or the wild. But it would be an amazing coincidence if all the children from different parts of the country had contracted wild measles, when we have relatively few outbreaks. That in any case would raise questions about the efficacy of the jab – something the government might also want to investigate.

Instead, Tony Blair and Co tell parents there is nothing to worry about and the vaccine is safe. But there are hundreds of intelligent and resourceful parents, many of whom have read far more scientific papers on vaccines than any politician, who are convinced their children have been horrifically damaged by the triple vaccine.

They have access to the web and circulate critiques of the latest research almost as soon as it is published. They are not scare-mongering zealots who want to "see a return to the dark ages", but their children do share a rare combination of conditions that they appeared to develop after receiving MMR. That may eventually prove to be coincidental; but so far nothing the government has said – and none of the studies it has cited as proof that there is no link – has changed their minds. (Indeed, the Institute of Medicine in the US has already conceded that in rare cases there just might be a link.)

Nor did an epidemiological study released last week – the latest from Prof Brent Taylor, head of child health at the Royal Free Hospital in London, and described by Dr David Salisbury, government head of immunology, as "a clean and elegant piece of work" – reassure parents. This study looked at the case papers of 473 children with autism born between 1979 and 1998 and found that the percentage of children who developed regressional autism was no higher before the introduction of MMR in 1988 than it was afterwards. Nor was there any difference in the frequency of autistic or bowel problems in children who had MMR before their parents became concerned about their development and those who had MMR afterwards or did not have it.

This paper – unlike the O'Leary paper – shows little raw data. It does not show the distribution of the children by year of birth and deals only in percentages, which makes it difficult to interpret because no idea is given of how many children are being dealt with in each year. On the face of it the research shows a straight line for autism and bowel disease across the 20-year period – but we know both have risen dramatically. It is most likely that Taylor has very few children in the early year groups and many more later.

Neither does the paper reveal how many in each group had MMR or what criteria Taylor has used to decide "regressional" autism as against "classic" autism (when the oldest children in his group were diagnosed as autistic, it was a good 15 years before a new variant regressive type had even been identified).

Prof Taylor claimed last week that this paper "should be close to the end game" for the MMR-autism hypothesis, and that MMR has the safest profile of any vaccine. Yet MMR accounts for the largest claims in the US for vaccine damage compensation. Interestingly, to fund this relatively generous scheme (compensation bill to date: US$1.3billion) the vaccine manufacturers pay a tax per vaccine into the communal pot on a sliding scale of risk. MMR was assessed in second place to DPT (diphtheria, whooping cough and tetanus), attracting a tax of US$4.44 per dose compared to just 29 cents for polio, for example. One recognised category for compensation is vaccine-induced measles.

It is no longer enough simply to say that millions of doses have been used in 90 countries as evidence of safety. As *Eye* readers will recall, early MMR had to be withdrawn after it caused mumps-related meningitis around the world. Other countries, including Finland, Sweden and in particular the US, have recorded unexplained hikes in autism rates. On the other side of the coin, Japan does not use MMR and does experience high rates of measles-related deaths: 17 last year. It, unfortunately, does not record autism rates.

No one in Britain wants to see a re-emergence of measles. But people do want to know why autism rates are growing; and for faith to be restored in our vaccination programme, MMR has to be ruled in or out – or at least an honest assessment has to be made of the relatives risks. That requires open research and debate and the choice of single vaccines for parents.

BASS RELIEF?

RAILTRACK administrator Ernst & Young should be investigated over its handling of the liquidation of the JS Bass group of packaging companies in 1988 (see *Eyes passim*), Austin Mitchell MP has said in a letter to trade minister Melanie Johnson.

As longstanding *Eye* readers will recall, in 1988 Barclays, with whom the Manchester-based family firm had banked for 80 years, put JS Bass into receivership after commissioning Ernst & Young to complete a survey of the company, which they did in just 48 hours, known in the trade as a "quick and dirty". Former JS Bass md Barry Chapman has spent the intervening 14 years gathering evidence to support his belief that the accountants acted fraudulently.

In his letter Mitchell alleges that documents have recently been added to the bundle of JS Bass papers at Manchester district court, including minutes of meetings Chapman insists never took place. He cites the example of the recently appeared minutes of a meeting of the directors of JS Bass subsidiary Southern & Darwent Ltd, dated 17 February 1989. The minutes record the transfer of shares from the directors to Mr M Banfield of Grant Thornton, joint liquidator of JS Bass with Ernst & Young. They also record the directors agreeing to place the company in liquidation and appear to bear Barry Chapman's own signature.

Mr Chapman has signed an affidavit to the effect that the document, including his signature, is a forgery. He maintains the directors never agreed to voluntary liquidation. Mitchell points out that as the company was in administration by this date, Chapman could not as the minutes state have been chairman at the alleged meeting, while all but one of the directors including Chapman had been dismissed by the administrator prior to this date.

Mitchell concludes his letter: "There has been a strong smell about this case for many years, and it's getting stronger. Ernst & Young and Grant Thornton are well connected and appear to have called in many favours by compliant colleagues, firms and Institutes over the Bass case. I would urge the case be investigated as an... investigation of considerable importance to UK industry."

PRISON NEWS

STAFF and inmates at London's only therapeutic community for prisoners, the Max Glatt Centre in Wormwood Scrubs, have been angered to learn that the centre is closing down in March to free up funds for the Scrubs' new E-Wing.

The centre, which helps around 30 men with a history of violence or substance abuse to overcome their problems through therapy and counselling, was set up more than 25 years ago by Dr Max Glatt, a pioneer in the field of treating addiction.

The former chief inspector of prisons, Sir David Ramsbotham, described the Max Glatt very favourably in his report of February 2000, stating: "In our view the unit represented a truly 'healthy' prison environment, which we commend to other prisons considering establishing this model of treatment for personality disordered prisoners."

The present inmates of the Max Glatt will be given the option of transferring to another therapeutic community, either at Grendon near Aylesbury, or the newly-built Dovegate PFI prison at Marchington in Staffordshire. Insiders suspect that clearing the way for Dovegate, where a maximum security therapeutic community facility for 200 offenders is currently only half occupied, played a major role in the prison service's decision to close the Max Glatt.

Dovegate was built and will be run for the next 25 years by Premier Custodial Group (PCG), a firm which holds the contracts to operate five prisons in the UK and is half owned by British PFI expert Serco (see *Eyes passim*) and half by US company Wackenhut Corrections Corporation.

Wackenhut's record in the US is chequered, to say the least. The company's contract to run two adult prisons in Arkansas was terminated last year because of poor standards. The state's Democrat senator, Jack Critcher, described Wackenhut as "masters of deception".

Two years ago Wackenhut was embroiled in a series of accusations of inmate abuse at prisons in Florida, Texas and Louisiana. In March 2000, for example, the US justice department filed a lawsuit against the company saying that conditions at a Wackenhut-run juvenile prison in Louisiana were "dangerous and life threatening". The prison has since been closed.

LOCKERBIE APPEAL

HEATHROW: TERMINALLY LAX?

IT WAS rather bad luck for the authorities at Heathrow airport that the biggest cash robbery in history took place in the most secure section of the airport as the Lockerbie appeal started at Camp Zeist. A key issue in the appeal was, once again, the abysmal state of security at Heathrow.

The new evidence heard by the five judges first appeared in the *Daily Mirror* last year, and was set out in *Eye* 1037. On the night before Pan Am flight 103 was blown out of the skies above Lockerbie, a security official at Heathrow, Raymond Manly, had found a broken padlock by a door down a secluded passage that led from Terminal 3 into the restricted area of the airport ("airside").

Terminal 3 housed the check-in desks for Pan Am. Shocked by the discovery, Mr Manly alerted his staff, wrote a report about it, and the police were called (they never came). This information was known to officers investigating the Lockerbie disaster but was never revealed to any of the inquiries since: not to the fatal accident inquiry in 1991; nor to the trial of two Libyans that concluded a year ago. It was only when Mr Manly went to the *Mirror* that any of the relatives of the Lockerbie dead had even heard about this gross lapse in security so close to the disaster.

When Mr Manly finally gave evidence to the appeal judges on 13 February, he was ill and plainly under the influence of his medication. Not surprisingly, his memory of the detail of the padlock and the doors was faulty. Every attempt was made by leading prosecution lawyer Alan Turnbull QC to discredit his evidence. But three facts emerged beyond all doubt: a padlock on the door had been broken that night; the broken lock gave access from the terminal to the restricted baggage-handling area; and such a lock on such a door had never been broken before or since.

Mr Turnbull did his best to write off the lock-breaking as the work of baggage handlers desperate to avoid a short walk; but he could not produce a single witness who had at any other time experienced a broken lock. Nor did Mr Turnbull even address the rather important question as to why such obviously relevant evidence had not been previously disclosed.

Eye readers who have been following this case (or have read our pamphlet last year on the subject) will know that a fundamental question is at which airport the Lockerbie bomb first went on to an aircraft. At the trial, William Taylor QC for the defence argued at length and most persuasively that the bomb went on at Heathrow. Crucial proof of that was the evidence of Heathrow baggage handler John Bedford, who said he saw a "maroony-brown Samsonite-type suitcase" on a baggage container bound for Pan Am 103.

Forensic evidence established to everyone's satisfaction that the bomb that blew up Pan Am flight 103 was in a Samsonite case. Bedford's was the only recorded sighting by anyone at the trial of a Samsonite suitcase — and he was pretty sure that the bag had not been there when he first saw the container and had left it for half an hour to have a cup of tea.

On the other side, the prosecution could produce no evidence at all to support their theory that the bomb went on a feeder flight at Luqa aiport, Malta, and went on via Frankfurt, changing planes twice, before exploding over Lockerbie. The Manly evidence of the security lapse at Heathrow on the night before the bombing points yet another finger of suspicion at Heathrow as the place the bomb was put on the fatal flight. If the bomb did go on at Heathrow, the defendant Ali Abdul basset al Megrahi could not possibly be guilty.

Ali Abdul basset al Megrahi

So what happens now? The judges have gone off to discuss the case. If they find the new evidence so important that it might have affected the original judgment, they could order a retrial: a prospect so hideous and expensive as to be unthinkable. On the other hand, if they uphold the verdict, their judgment (like that of their predecessors) will be subject to constant doubt and challenge.

A HULL OF A MESS

HOW have the ill-trained "pilots" on the Humber been coping with ships since the strike of all fully-trained pilots, which stays solid? The record in the first week of February was as follows:

1 February: The vessel "Englishman", with a new pilot provided by ABP, the hugely rich company which has owned Hull docks since they were privatised in 1989, collided with the No 12 buoy at Killingolhme. The pilot didn't notice the collision and the buoy was dragged up river for three miles, crossing highly sensitive gas pipelines with the buoy mooring weight still attached. When the pilot finally discovered the accident, he was told not to use his mobile telephone in case anyone should monitor what he said.

2 February: The mighty 35,000-tonne Bohinj, piloted by ABP, smashed into No 1 berth at the Immingham oil terminal, causing serious damage to the terminal and a big hole in the bow of vessel. No repair berth was available at Immingham, so the Bohinj was towed to the King George V dock. About a thousand tonnes of water flooded into the boat from the hole in the bow.

4 February: The car carrier City of Rome arrived at Grimsby docks with a new ABP pilot on board and collided with the lock and coal jetty before hitting the cargo ship Maya alongside Freshney terminal. The damage to the Maya was repaired by a team of ABP engineers who suddenly arrived on the scene to make the ship seaworthy.

6 February: The vessel Susa K, while leaving a berth on the river Trent, was stuck between two jetties and went aground. The ABP pilot was rescued from his predicament by a JCB heavy plant vehicle that proceeded to push to Susa K away from the jetty and back into the river.

7 February: The cargo vessel Jo Ching, bound for Immingham dock with anew ABP pilot on board, collided with an approach jetty, holing the ship on its starboard side.

The attitude of the striking pilots to the dispute should be compared to that of ABP. On 22 January a general meeting of the strikers agreed unanimously that the strike had had the effect of exposing the reduced safety levels in the port and offered to return to work at once on pre-strike conditions. This offer was brusquely rejected by ABP who announced that it was "not in the interests of safety" to return to the old conditions. The dispute continued with the results set out above.

THE CHEQUE IS IN THE POST

HOW to explain the schizophrenic approach of the company that runs the post office, Consignia, to the mounting threat of privatisation?

On the one hand it condemns privatisation, saying it will allow private operators to "cherry pick" business mail, leaving a second class service for the rest of us. On the other hand it is working on its own schemes to promote "business post" with all kinds of "premium" services (like paying extra to have letters delivered on time).

Perhaps the contradiction has something to do with Consignia's choice of consultant. For it has hired PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to advise on "future strategy" – the same PwC that is playing a leading part in the lobby to break up postal services worldwide through the international trade treaty known as GATS.

GATS (the general agreement on trade in services) obliges signatory countries to "trade in services". Among the many public services it opens up to multinationals are the postal ones; and firms like DHL, UPS and TNT are actively lobbying to use the GATS treaty to win work from formerly publicly-owned post offices.

Consignia

Sam Piazza, global chief executive officer of PwC, is a founder member of the "European Services Forum", one of the many business lobbies that fights for GATS. He sits on the forum's board alongside Uwe Dorken, chairman and chief executive of DHL. Also on the board are Jaap Mulders and Russell Patten, chairman and secretary-general of the "European Express Association", the trade body representing big private post operators like DHL, Federal Express, TNT and UPS.

The forum began its fight for postal services in 2000 with a conference on "GATS and postal and express delivery". PwC staff were much in evidence, and delegates agreed that "premium" and "express" services to business must be promoted over humdrum "universal" services for the great unwashed. The *Eye* asked Consignia how much public money it paid PwC. We were told the information was "not available".

● WHO is the employment minister at the department of trade dealing with trade union law? Step forward Alan Johnson. In 1996 he was general secretary of the Union of Communication Workers and involved in intense negotiation over the post office's plans to restructure the pay and conditions of its workers.

The plan was called The Way Forward and was eventually agreed by the union negotiators led by Mr Johnson. All he had to do was put the matter to his executive – which rejected the document and embarked on a series of one-day strikes. Johnson was angry and isolated, but other doors were opening. In the run-up to the 1997 general election a number of safe seats suddenly fell vacant, allowing Labour's national executive to nominate candidates without going through the full process of local constituency selection.

A peerage was arranged for Stuart Randall, MP for the safe seat of Hull, West. And Alan Johnson, a supporter of Tony Blair, was just the man to fill the old seat. Since he took up his job at the DTI he has been vigorously pursuing privatisation policies opposed by his ungrateful old union.

You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

INVESTIGATION of the wreckage left by the collapse of Enron Europe has confirmed just how much the London company was, as suggested in *Eye* 1046, a microcosm of the policies and practices in Houston that brought down the one-time pipeline operator that became the world's largest energy trader and possibly biggest ever Ponzi scheme fraud.

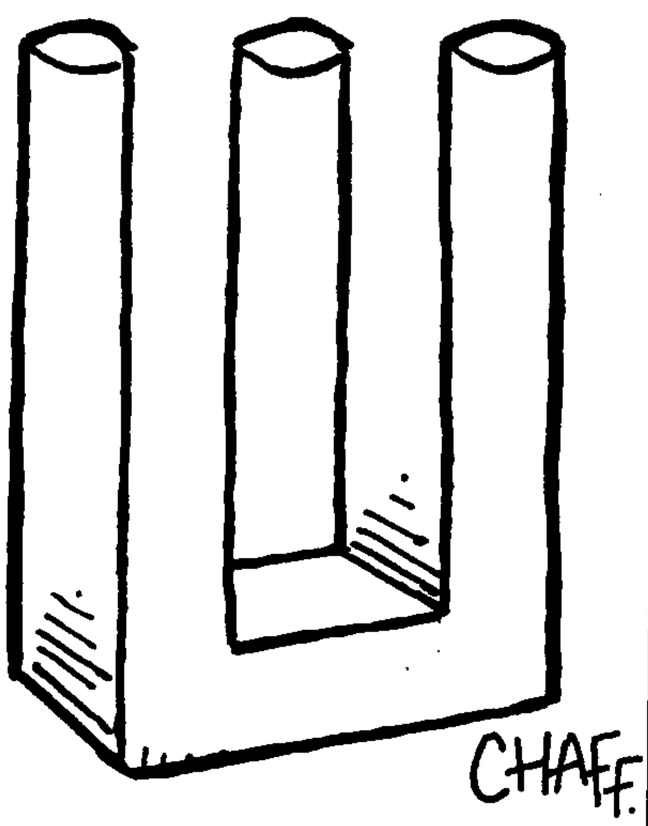
Information from senior former Enron Europe executives discloses the accounting tricks that should have been spotted and stopped by regulators and auditor Arthur Andersen, and which were pioneered in Enron's overseas operations where London was the key.

Former Enron chief executive officer Jeffrey Skilling – the man who wasn't there, to believe his version, (which few, including his own mother, do) – was a one-time Enron Europe director. So too was Enron treasurer now chief financial officer Jeffrey McMahon. Both played key roles in constructing the off balance sheet partnerships and special purpose vehicles which enabled Enron to show ever rising profits while hiding ever increasing debt and losses.

According to Enron Europe insiders, the company tested many of the dubious creative accounting techniques which were responsible for its spectacular collapse on deals linked to the Teesside and Sutton Bridge power stations. These included:

- The use of "total return swaps" to create "virtual assets" – even virtual power stations – which were then used to raise money offshore and off balance sheet but with loans that were ultimately dependent on an Enron guarantee and therefore very much *on* balance sheet.
- Ever more exotic securitisation or monetisation of unusual supposed income streams such as the Teesside maintenance contract, the "cushion gas" reserves kept in North Sea fields as a safety measure or even the accrual book of deferred but not guaranteed future revenues.
- A bonus system for top executives which gave them undeclared percentages of power station contracts and allowed them to calculate the "net present values" upon which these bonuses were based resulting in a handful of Enron American executives sharing a $10m from the Teesside contract.
- The crediting of unrealised profits to fatten earnings and so keep up Enron's remarkable and giveaway unbroken record of ever rising numbers.
- The consistent failure of Enron Europe to produce cash flow accounts, relying on an accounting loophole, which would have revealed just how little real cash was being generated. The liquidators have discovered that Houston swept up all but £10m from London every day despite the company having a £150m wage bill and liabilities in billions.
- The failure of the Securities & Futures Authority to confirm that Enron Europe had sufficient capital to engage in multi-billion deals in the energy market because it considered energy trading of no significance because there was no public exposure. Tell that to Enron shareholders, employees and creditors. To get around this problem Enron ensured that it only acted as an "arranger" of the trades, thereby avoiding onerous capitalisation rules, leaving the all-important profits from derivatives to be made offshore by a "dealer" who was outside SFA regulation or inspection. This also ensured that all the profits were booked tax free, leaving Enron Europe to book ever growing losses – £556m in three years when revenues rose from £309m to £2.3bn on which Enron paid total UK tax of just £60m.
- The acceptance by Andersen of all of the above without forcing disclosure, plus compliance in ignoring the need for provisions against losses on gas contracts that ultimately cost £268m and pipeline contracts that cost £90m while agreeing to divvy up a £50m profit so it could be credited in different quarters and as different types of revenue to keep Wall Street happy.

The Enron Accounting System



But then from 1993 Enron insiders suggest the energy giant had become Andersen's biggest client. In the UK from 1994 Andersen earned £8.75m from Enron, virtually equally split between audit and consultancy, i.e. tax, work. These fees no doubt helped ensure Enron achieved what one former senior executive terms its main objectives: to avoid tax and operate off balance sheet.

First Goldman Sachs and then J.P.Morgan advised Enron Europe on its ever more complex financings. The stake in the Teesside power plant was sold to a special purpose vehicle Thornbeam, which in turn sold it on to a Dutch company, Strategic Money Management, which then issued collateralised notes to a leading bank. This device gave Enron – not a triple A risk – access to triple A money.

This £50m deal enabled Enron to securitise its income stream from the Teesside plant in such a way as to boost its earnings during 1996. But the notes issued by Strategic Money Management, a Morgan-linked company, depended on a guarantee from Enron Houston so were far from off balance sheet. This deal also involved the use of offshore charitable trusts – going rate £100,000 a deal – as cut-outs to obscure the real ownership. A similar trust was used in the multi-billion Mahonia oil and gas deals set up by Morgan and its merger partner Chase Manhattan in Jersey which are now the subject of litigation from the banks who lent against the securitised energy deals.

This £50m was then split between two different quarters and non-recurring and operational profits so enhancing the picture presented to the only people Skilling cared about – Wall Street bankers, brokers and analysts.

Skilling was reportedly very angry and determined to avoid a repeat blip in the earnings caused by having to provide in 1997 for the £268m ($440m) payment on the J Block gas contracts in the North Sea. Although gas prices fell from 1994 through 1996, Andersen accepted there was no need to make a provision against profits because Enron was contesting the contract in court. The first shareholders learned of this disaster therefore was when Enron settled just before trial and revealed a £100m loss.

Skilling was also instrumental in the Sutton Bridge power station deal which saw Enron build the Lincolnshire plant and then sell it as a "virtual power station" to Eastern Electricity leaving it with an income stream and the ability to operate the plant as it wished.

The sale and repurchase of interests in Sutton Bridge, which included Cayman Island Financing, to unidentified "third part investors" first enabled Enron to book profits of £61m in 1997 by the simple device of revaluation and consolidating the "paper" profit. But in 1998 a buyback of shares created a "paper" loss of almost £14m while a similar reshuffle of the Teesside interest booked a loss of £10m.

The Enrici Power Marketing partnership between Enron and ICI enabled Enron to securitise up front another virtual power station with the aid of US investors in the two partnerships. This ultimately cost Enron Europe £170m, mostly undisclosed until 2000.

The securitisation deals linked to Teesside and Sutton Bridge helped Enron to ensure it made the profit numbers Wall Street expected thereby driving up the share price so enriching those Enron executives such as Skilling and chairman Ken Lay who were able to cash in big time. They also mean there will be nothing for creditors from the Teesside stake.

The others who cashed in were the group of Enron executives who had joined Lay in the 80s and whose faces increasingly failed to fit in the 90s. They had been given extravagant contracts

THE DIRECTORS

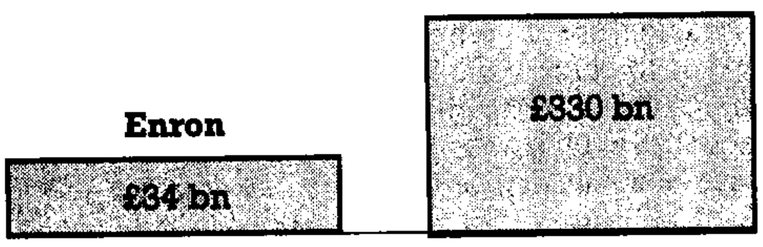
DREDGE/RIGG

THE TROUBLE WITH THE WORKERS IS THAT THEY DON'T TAKE ENOUGH HOLIDAYS ...
109.
EH ? BUT YOU USUALLY SAY ...
SUMMER BOOKINGS ARE DOWN 50% – WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH THE BUGGERS ?
MEGA TRAVEL

Stock Horror

Enron – not an isolated disaster

Shareholders' losses over two years...



**America's most widely-held share*

which it was too expensive and embarrassing to pay out. These "developers" were entitled to a bonus on any foreign power project that was completed on which they could claim involvement. This included projects in India (a disaster), Poland, Sardinia and Turkey as well as Teesside. The "developers" shared 8 percent of the net value of Teesside worth an estimated $10m split five ways. Among the beneficiaries are said to have been former senior executives John Wing – who had a similar deal on the plant in Turkey on which Enron agreed a fee of $3m and a loan of $5.6m – and Wessex Water boss Rebecca Mark who had a piece of the Indian project.

Judging from the increased information contained in the Enron Europe accounts for the year to June 2000, even Andersen was starting to choke on the off balance sheet diet and producing ever more impenetrable accounts – an Enron trademark. But it was too late. By the time these accounts were finalised last July, Enron was already going under and could well take Andersen with it.

ONCE again Michael Ashcroft has shown his astuteness as a share dealer – an art he first proved in the heady days of the incestuous deals that built first Hawley and then ADT.

The man who bought both Belize and the Tory party is a major shareholder and director of Tyco International, the old fashioned conglomerate which developed out of its takeover of ADT. Even before Enronitis hit there were those on Wall Street, including the watchdog Securities & Exchange Commission, who had questions about Tyco's accounting policies for its never-ending acquisitions.

Tyco shares have been in a spin post Enron and some unflattering publicity in the *Wall Street Journal*. The *Journal* highlighted much of what was wrong and hidden at Enron and at another lover of off balance sheet and aggressive accounting, the Irish drugs group Elan. Despite plans to split up or spin off various divisions the price crashed by almost two thirds to $22 before recovering last week to $28.

Luckily for Ashcroft he completed the sale of one million Tyco shares in December for $60 each. This followed previous sales during the year at prices of $58 to $69, taking his proceeds up to $160m. Not that Ashcroft has avoided the Tyco crash: he still has some four million shares whose value has fallen by $128m to a mere $112m. But the sales still saved him some $30m.

And all still likely to be tax free as presumably Lord Ashcroft will be only facing UK tax on income received here. He no doubt continues to be domiciled abroad for such matters as capital gains tax.

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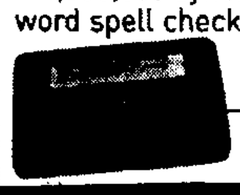
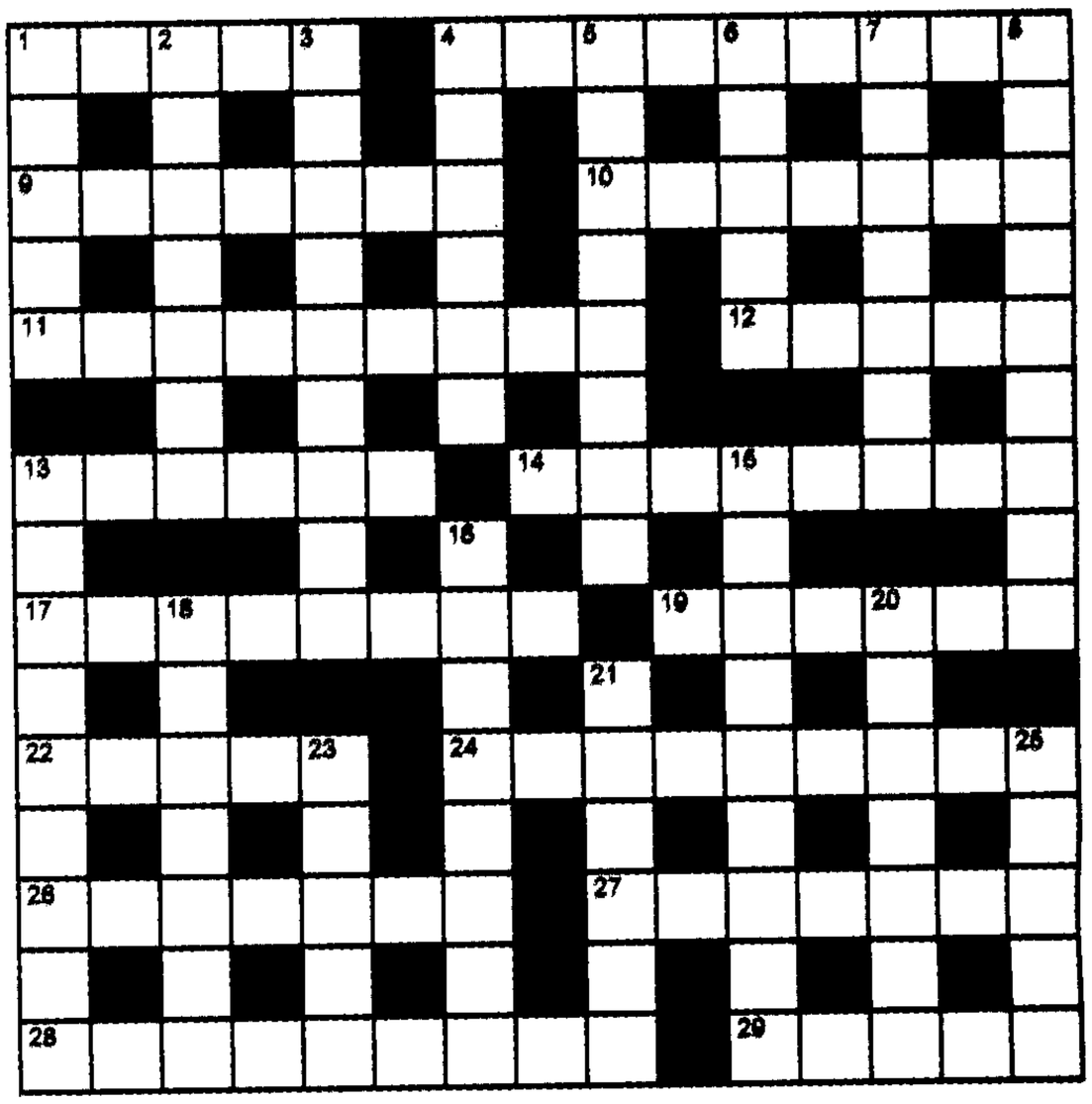


Advertisement

EYE CROSSWORD 203

by Cyclops



£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 1 March 2002.

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk

ACROSS

1 It's spite overturned ex-minister Chamberlain, according to his mates (5)
4 To-die-for oral sex and a bang to finish you off? (5,4)
9 Oriental treatment dump containing argon – America flips (7)
10 Unconcealed hostility when Blunt rolled over naked (4,3)
11 "Silver" tucked into awful shit pet food (9)
12 Rent-free residence but crap position? (5)
13/27 Brilliantly successful line in capital provides Brenda with excuse to get out and about more (6,7)
14 Opening of video, '*Arse*' at Tate provoked bad feeling (8)
17 Flannel supplied when erection lost on TV series (4,4)
19 See 4 Down
22 Rule of Brenda: leather strap restricts weight (5)
24 Give a really pisspoor rendition of an Ice T number and charge! (6,3)
26 Outside ramshackle flat (7)
27 See 13 Across
28 Brigitte Bardot no longer to decide if a little creature's male or female (3,6)
29 Topless geriatrics get them off and achieve an orgasm (5)

DOWN

1 Underwear (seconds) to be seen in TV docu-soap (5)
2 Writer in a bust-up with his one-time protégé (7)
3 No Spitting Image without peers (9)
4/19 The press is not entitled to even a bronze vehicle (6,6)
5 He's doing it again, the love rat! (3-5)
6 City, lacking capital, haemorrhages (5)
7 Prosecution's pointless linen costume (3,4)
8 Hack gets out of woollen suit and it's as awful as you can imagine (5-4)
13 Lacking energy, Geri's tits – a new-fangled medical condition (9)
15 It's hell to MP, getting cut up (9)
16 End of condom (or 'Mates') split by little monkey (8)
18 Footsie and length contraction with finger (2,5)
20 Plastic chip attached to Clary – "kinky!" (7)
21 Doughty type has jar (not pissed) (6)
23 Celebrity poser, single bitch on the up (5)
25 Politicians responsible for leaks about Blair's last letter (5)

Crossword 202 winner: RICHARD WATERS

Solution to Crossword 202

ACROSS: 1 All piss and wind 9 Offside 10 Veiling 11 Insomniac 12 Elsan 13 Give head 15 Waylay 18 Sarnie 19 Well hung 22 Amigo 24 Freemason 26 Charlie 27 Thin air 28 Policemans ball.

DOWN: 1 Adoring 2 Life-saver 3 Idiom 4 Sheridan 5 Novice 6 Whitehall 7 Nails 8 Agency 14 Hoi polloi 16 Louisiana 17 Dementia 18 Snatch 20 General 21 Effete 23 Idaho 25 Maids.

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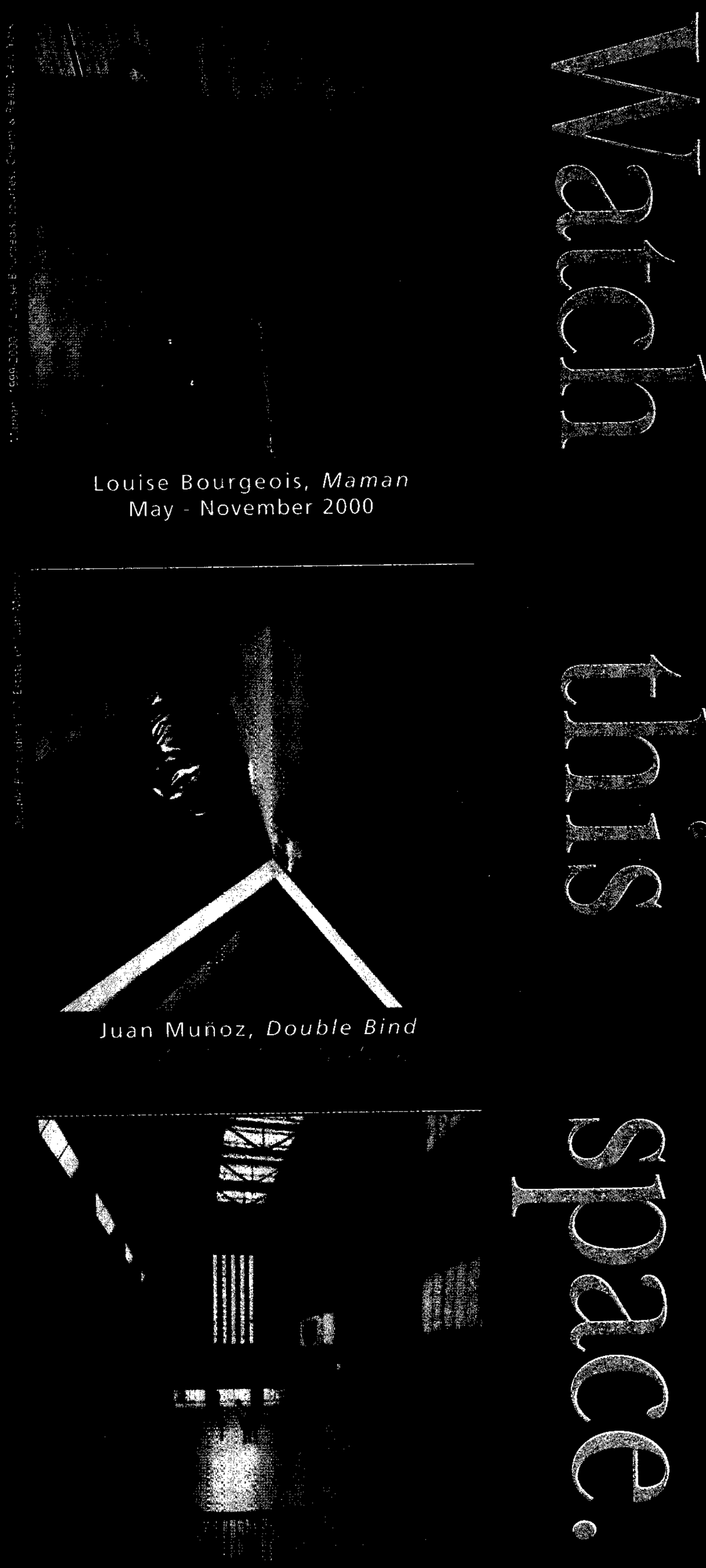

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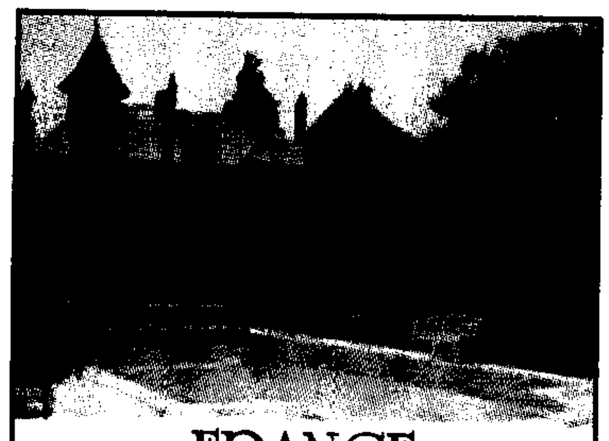

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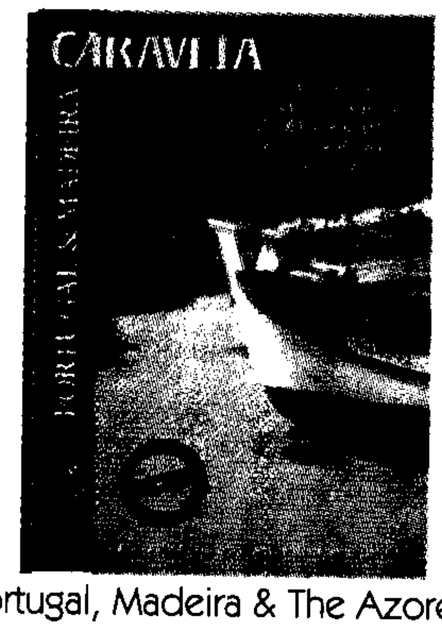

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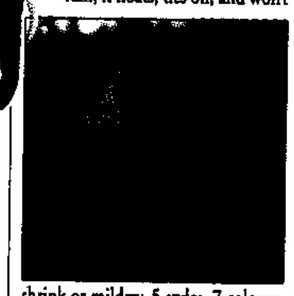

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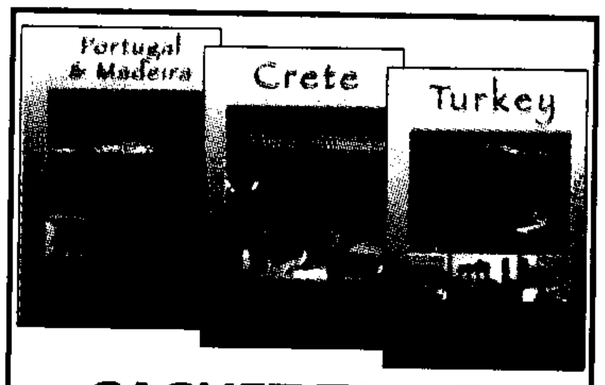

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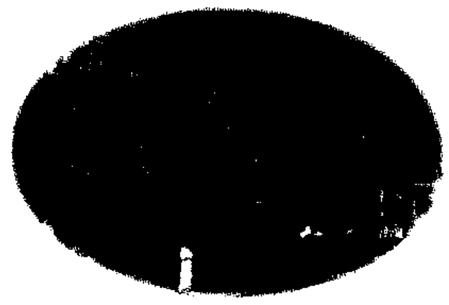

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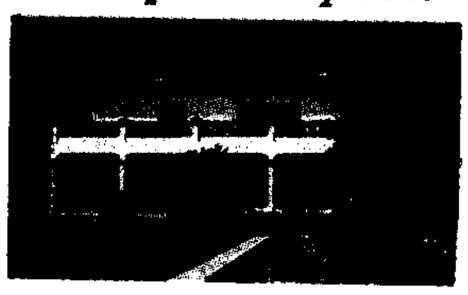

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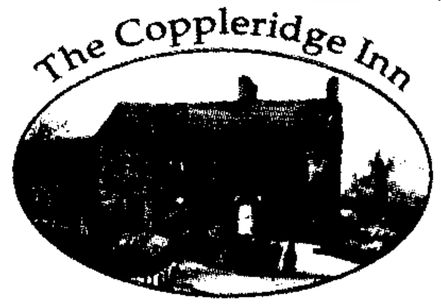

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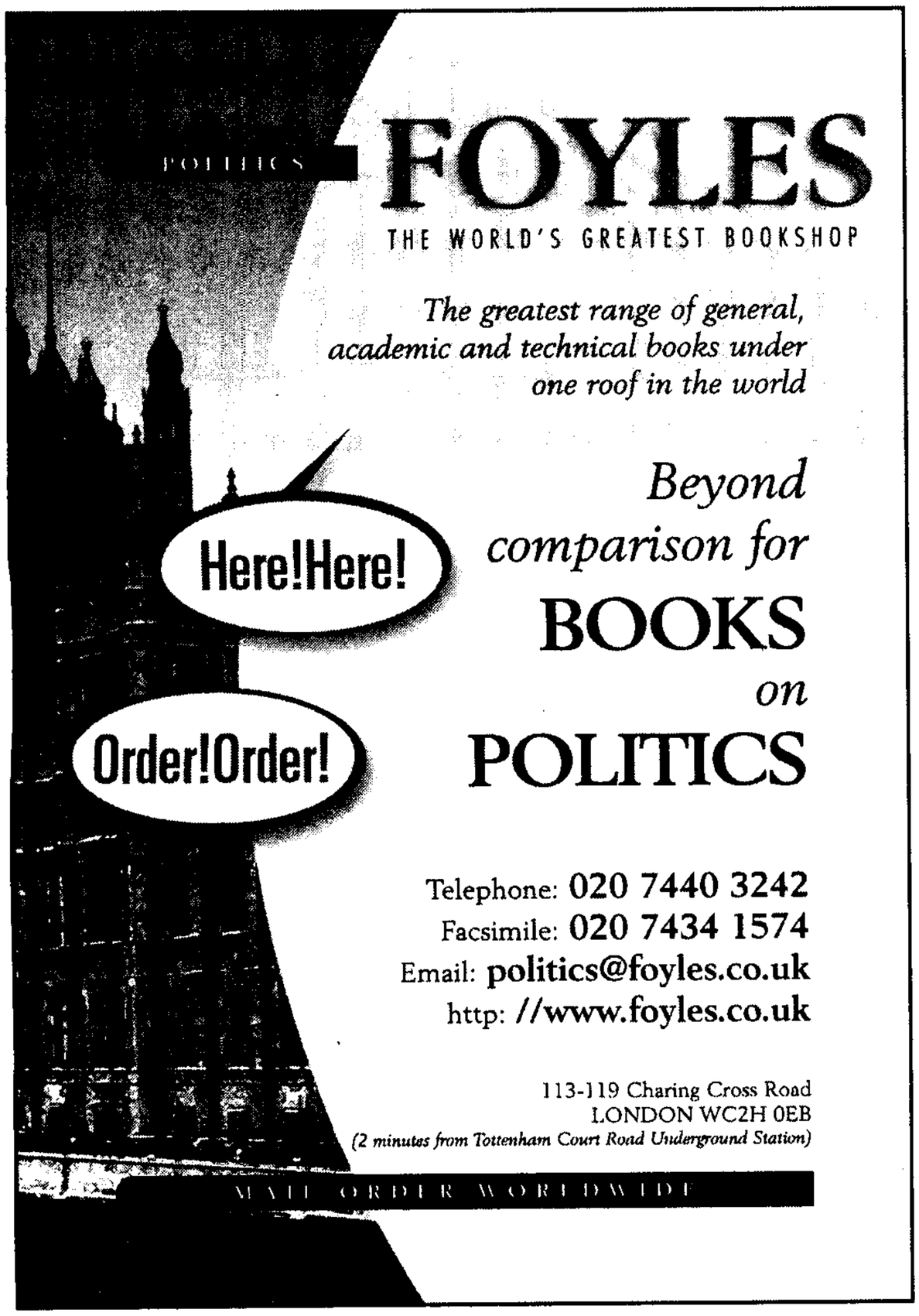

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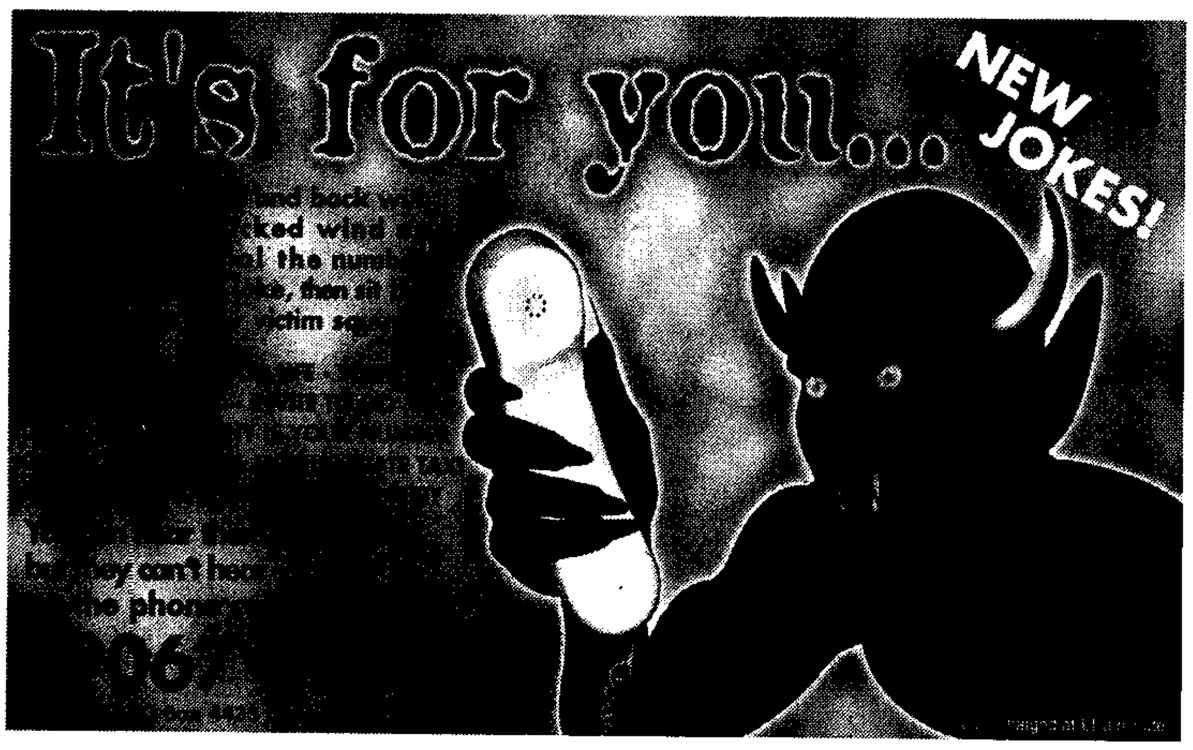

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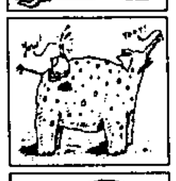

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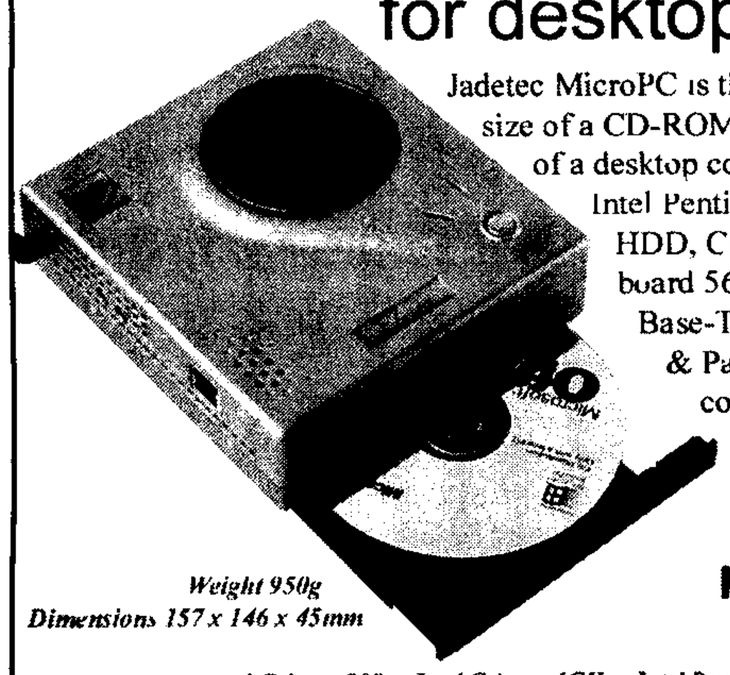

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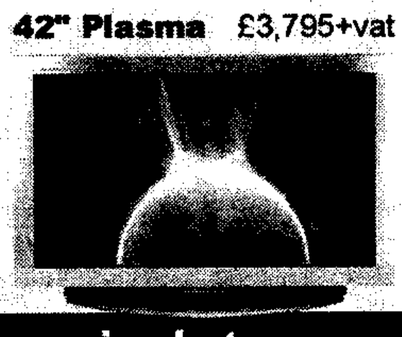

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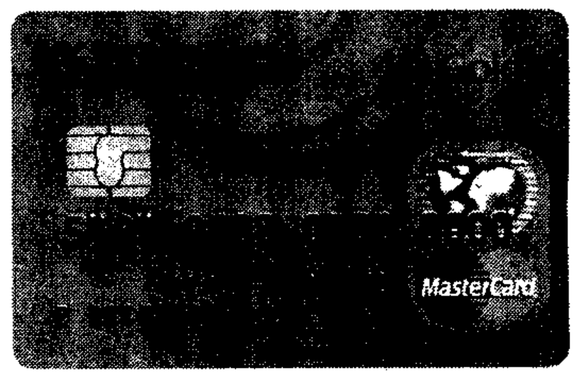

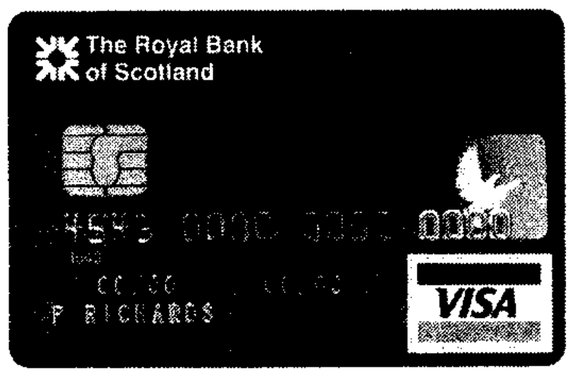

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EYE LOVE

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TALL, FIT, HANDSOME, DIVORCED EX-DIRECTOR, 48, now semi-retired and with time to spare, wltm slim adventuress for laughter and fun. SW London – laertes100@aol.com

MALE, FORTIES seeks occasional day-time affair with smart intelligent attractive female, Edinburgh btbthside@lycos.com

LONDON/SURREY BASED BUSINESS MAN – 6'2" and attractive, seeks attractive sexy lady, 25-33 for long term relationship. Ring 07763 283606.

NAUGHTY BOY, 39 – extremely attractive – seeks strict goddess for a fabulous adventure. Contact Adventures1962@aol.com – or box 0948.

VERY DISCREET PROFESSIONAL GENT 50's seeks younger attached filly – occasional liaisons. London/Cambs. Photo please. Box 0648.

BUG BUSTY BOURNEMOUTH BIRD seeks hornithologist to feather nest and listen to bird song at dawn. Box 1048.

MALE ENTREPRENEUR, YOUTHFUL (some say) 50's, has time 24/7 for discreet no strings fun times with 40's/50's slim lady. Sussex, Surrey, Hants. Box 0748.

ATTRACTIVE 'OLDER' MAN, PROFESSIONAL, EDUCATED, married, very, very, very wide interests – WLTM 'older' lady (50-65) years, married or single, for discreet uninhibited affair. You are educated, interesting and randy. Looks unimportant, passion is. Inner London area, preferably. Box 1547.

YOU FEMALE – married, unsatisfied – me handsome, tactile, discrete, free daytime – londontouch@hotmail.com or Box 0647.

FIRM, SHARP, CHALLENGING, SINGLE AND SLIM MALE looking for a curvaceous female, 26-40 with a genuine penchant for much higher heels/lingerie (do you exist?). I am a young forties professional with GSOH seeking mutual rewarding and discrete good times/relationship. Box 0448.

AS SPRING APPROACHES, a tall, amusing, successful, strict man – Bristol/London, 40 – seeks a naughty younger woman for passion and hanky spanky. I live life to the full: film, theatre, travel, eating out and eating in, nights on the town and weekends in the country. I am generous, romantic and good humoured and love laughter and the rich tapestry of life. If you would like a fun relationship with some spice then please contact me with your telephone number. Box 0148 or eveready690@hotmail.com

ATTRACTIVE, INTELLIGENT 42 year old married man WLTM attractrive female to wine and dine, London/Gloucester. Box 1348.

STRAIGHTFORWARD, RESPONSIVE married man, 50, slim, seeks similarly disposed woman for adventurous, exciting sex. East Anglis. Box 1248.

EYE SEEK

IS THAT A PERSONAL AD IN YOUR POCKET OR ARE YOU JUST PLEASED TO READ ME? I'm no angel – if you're not either, then come up and see me sometime. Call: 'WHO'S IN THE BAG?' – 0800 389 4748.

VALENTINE WINNER 2002

CONGRATULATIONS!

Our Valentine Message Winners 2002:

"To Tina. One year on, still no custard. Love from Seamus."

Two bottles of Private Eye 'His 'n' Hers' personalised champagne on the way to them, delivered to their door.

Is 19p too much to invest to find your lifetime partner?

By return of post we will send you details, in complete confidence, of people we think could be ideally suited to you!

What sort of people join a dating agency like Dateline? Well actually, it's people just like you!

In fact recent research reveals as many as 1 in 5 unattached men and women turn to dating agencies to start relationships. And the researchers say this figure is set to DOUBLE over the next five years!

Social patterns and trends have simply changed making the age old role of the matchmaker more relevant than ever.

More and more people are joining from all over the country – from villages, market towns and cities. The problems of meeting people are not confined to any particular locality. The backgrounds and occupations of Dateline members are equally varied – GP's, surveyors, solicitors, engineers, surgeons, journalists, teachers, secretaries, stockbrokers, nurses, chemists, receptionists, bus drivers and even zoo keepers. Looking for a partner is not confined to any class or category.

What all Dateline members have in common is a considerate attitude towards meeting new people.

How does Dateline work?

You choose the sort of people you want to meet yourself! After completing a comprehensive questionnaire your information is carefully compiled and the matching process, in which your data is compared with that of every other member begins. The most compatible matches will be found and their details forwarded to you immediately. Your details can likewise show up on matches from other members and they will contact you, and so a whole new social life begins.

Dateline also has a member's helpline open during the day, evenings and at the weekend.

A few documented Dateline experiences.

"a few more letters passed between us and then she phoned me" – "It was a wonderful phone call – absolutely brilliant". "I can certainly say that it was the best thing I've ever done!"
A.H. Derby

"when we tell people how we met, they all think it's a great idea! I just wanted to meet a kind and caring person – and I did!"
J.C. Lancs.

"I actually asked Karen to marry me on the third date" – "All my friends at work said I was stupid – until they met Karen of course!!"
G.C. Suffolk

What sort of people join Dateline?

■ **Brian** *is a 53 year old Air Traffic Controller from Dorset. He enjoys dinner parties and the theatre. Brian describes himself as averagely built and attractive.*

■ **Anna** *is a 32 year old Medical Secretary from Reading. A slim and attractive non-smoker who enjoys socialising. She likes to listen to classical and operatic music.*

■ **Malcolm** *is a 44 year old Software Engineer from South London. He describes himself as slim and attractive. He is a non-smoker and enjoys classical music.*

■ **Karen**, *47, lives in Chichester and likes eating out and spending time with friends. She also enjoys jazz music and the countryside.*

The answer seems to be – people like you!

* Names have been changed for reasons of privacy.
Membership restricted to ages 18+ only

Dateline is part of the OneSaturday plc Group of companies

Your Details

Mr ❒ Mrs ❒ Ms ❒

Surname:

First Name:

Address:

Post Code:

Tel No:

E-mail:

Marital Status:

❒ Single ❒ Divorced
❒ Widowed ❒ Separated

Age: Height:

Occupation

Religion:

Build: Attractiveness:

❒ Slight ❒ V. Attractive
❒ Medium ❒ Attractive
❒ Large ❒ Average

Your Personality

tick which traits closely describe you

❒ Affectionate ❒ Fashionable
❒ Serious ❒ Practical
❒ Considerate ❒ Conventional
❒ Shy ❒ Reliable
❒ Romantic ❒ Adventurous

Your interests

Please tick for a liking, cross for a dislike or leave blank for no pref.

❒ Wining/Dining ❒ Jazz/Folk music
❒ Pubs ❒ Classical music
❒ Sports/Keep fit ❒ Theatre/Arts
❒ Politics/History ❒ Watching TV
❒ Reading ❒ Smoking
❒ Travelling ❒ Mixing with friends
❒ Science/Tech ❒ Children
❒ Cinema ❒ Homemaking
❒ Pets/Animals ❒ Gardening
❒ Pop music ❒ Countryside

Your Attitude

tick for yes, cross for no or leave blank if you don't feel strongly

❒ I prefer town life
❒ I involve myself in community activities
❒ I have many friends of my own sex
❒ I am interested in current affairs
❒ I am looking for one special relationship
❒ I like team activities
❒ My work makes it difficult to meet new people
❒ I want to extend my social life as well as finding a special relationship

Your Ideal Partner

Min. age: Max. age:

Height: min. max.

❒ Don't mind

Marital Status:

❒ Single ❒ Divorced
❒ Widowed ❒ Separated
❒ Don't mind

Build: Attractiveness:

❒ Slight ❒ V. Attractive
❒ Medium ❒ Attractive
❒ Large ❒ Average

How to contact us

Send in your completed questionnaire (1st class, 27p 1st class) to:

Dateline
St Peter Port
Guernsey GY1

Or phone our 24hr information number. You can even click through to our fully interactive website.

As soon as we receive your completed questionnaire from this page, we'll immediately send you the name and description of someone who could be YOUR ideal partner – absolutely FREE of charge, in complete confidence and with no obligation whatsoever. So what have you got to lose?

We hope to be able to offer a variety of interesting offers from us and other reputable organisations. However should you not wish us to pass your information to them or to receive these offers, please tick this box. ❒

Dept. PE 90

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www.dateline.co.uk

or call our 24hr information line on: 0871 871 8711

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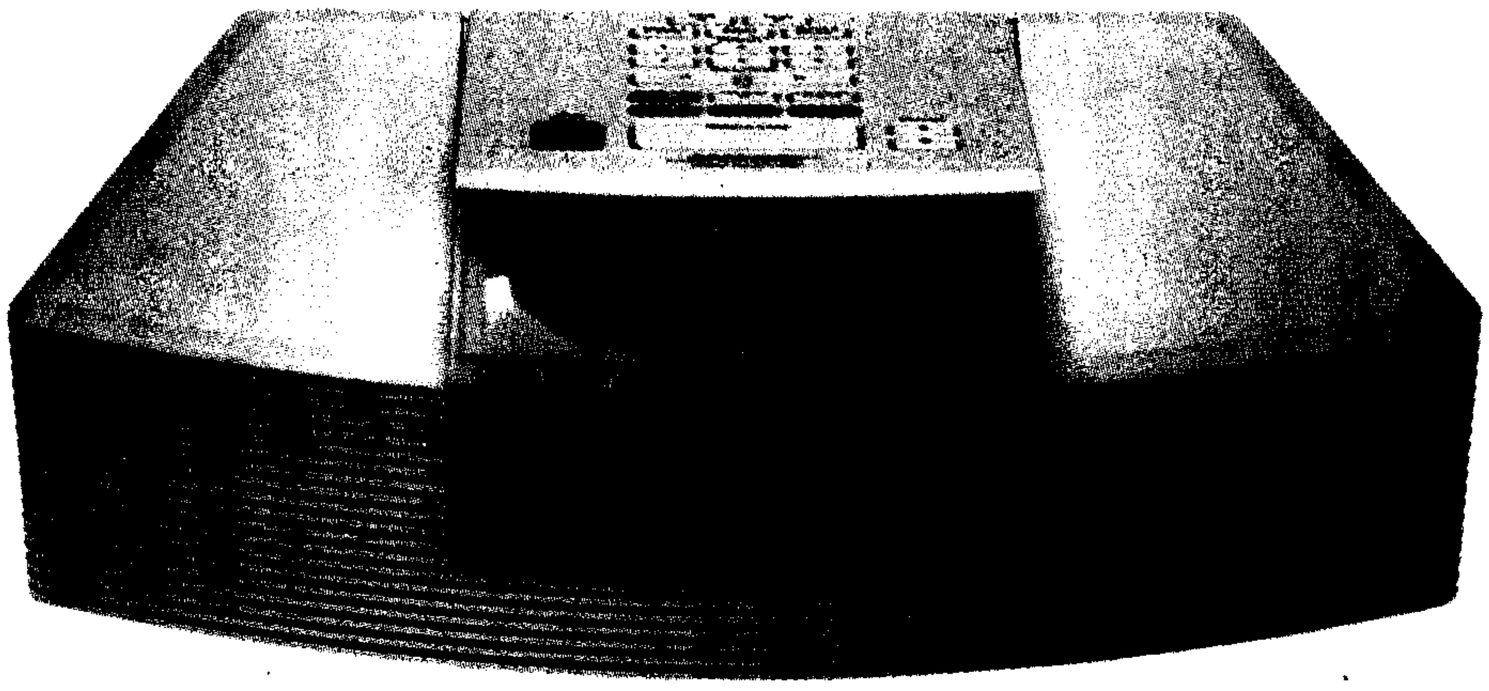

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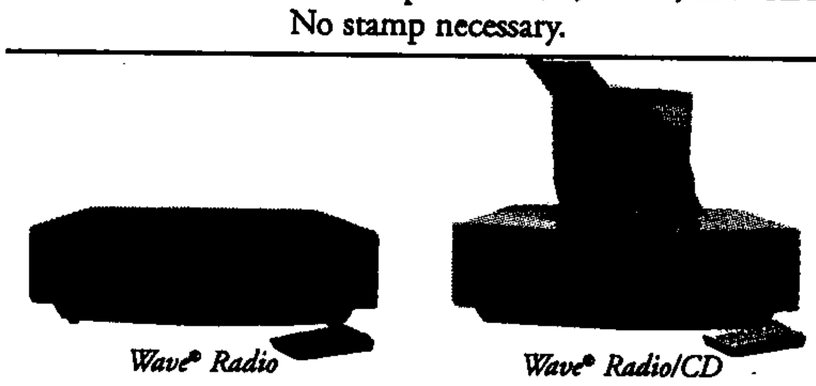

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